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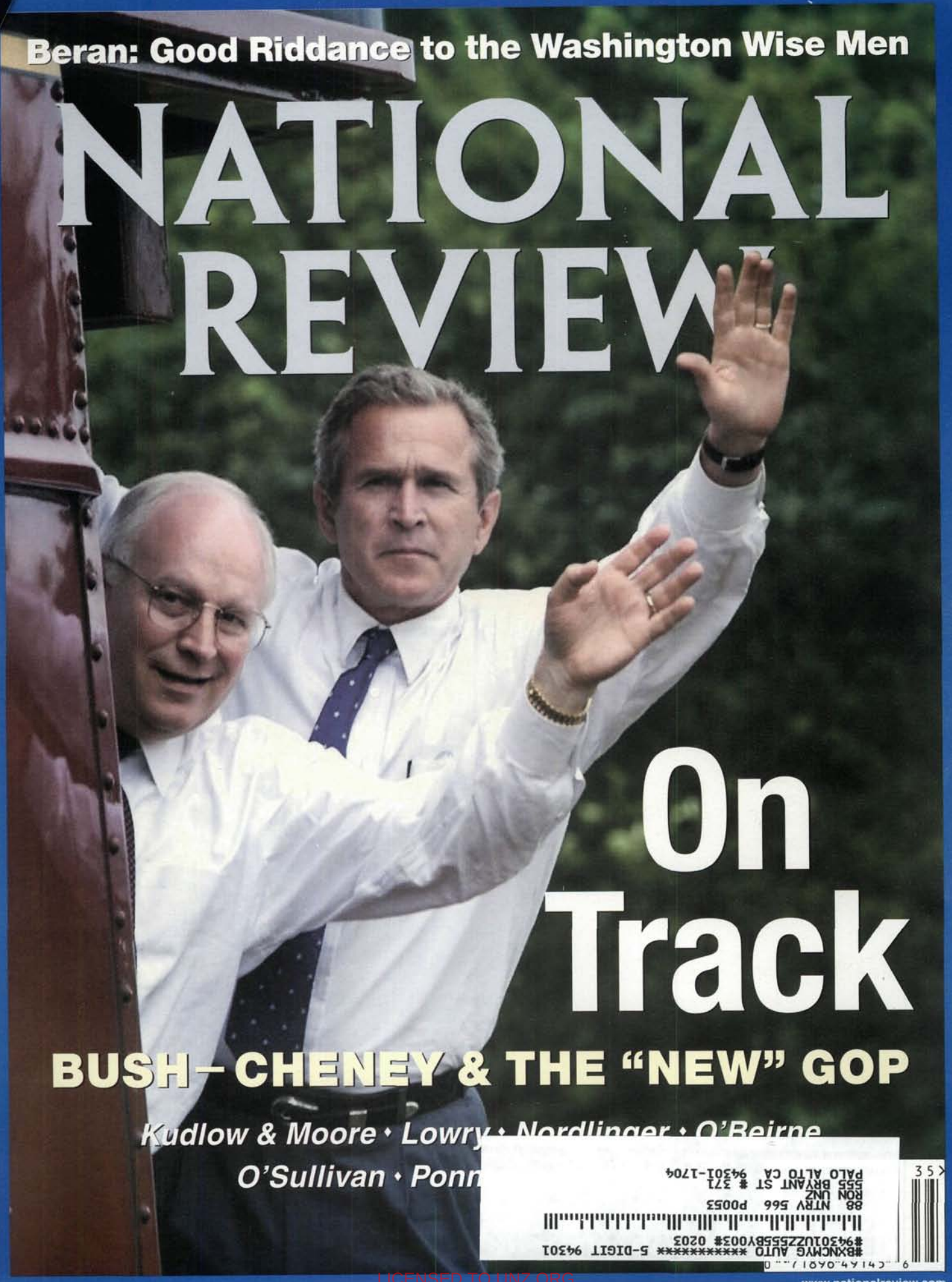

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■ LETTERS ■

THE NEW EUGENICS

What a strange contrast in NATIONAL REVIEW. In the same issue (July 31) with an excellent cover story by Ramesh Ponnuru rightly blasting the Supreme Court for its horrid decision upholding infanticide ("Supreme Hubris") is a piece by Matt Ridley actually defending eugenics ("The New Eugenics").

How can the same magazine, that defends innocent human life in a cogently reasoned cover story publish another essay standing athwart those same pro-life principles? The effect is to undermine the pro-life message of NATIONAL REVIEW, usually a reliable ally.

Ridley's is not an informational essay; it is an advocacy piece through and through. It cleverly steers around controversial corners. But at the end of the day, the principle against eugenics should stand.

The pro-eugenics people will always find a way to get their message out to the mostly sympathetic liberal American media. But who would have thought they would succeed in finding an outpost at NATIONAL REVIEW?

Tim Goeglein
Washington, D.C.

In "The New Eugenics," Matt Ridley finds genetic manipulation acceptable for therapeutic and cosmetic purposes, provided it's a private choice, free of governmental coercion. We have "little to worry about," because "genetically modified people will not pose a great threat to society," even if we "create them." But it's not the kids with designer genes who give me the creeps, it's those who harbor such a reductionist view of human life.

There's nothing wrong, in principle, with therapeutic interventions aimed at healing a chromosomal deficiency, provided human subjects are not reduced to research objects in the process. The problem is—with the exception of what Ridley calls "the immensely difficult and dangerous" gene therapy—all current interventions and the futuristic "simple example" he gives for curing Huntington's disease do involve treating human beings like matter to be tinkered with and even disposed of. Living human embryos are created in labs, subjected to quality control, and eliminated if "defective." Currently, about 90 percent of human embryos created for in vitro fertilization perish at some point in the process.

Ridley draws no moral distinction between premarital blood-screening among Ashkenazi Jews (to avoid marriages where both carry the Tay-Sachs mutation) or certain types of gene therapy, on the one hand, and, on the other, procedures that result in the intentional death of a living human being by abortion or by the selective elimination of "defective" and "excess" embryos. In his moral calculus, it's of no concern that nine of ten humans could die in the parents' quest to improve the survivor's musical or athletic skills. The only evil he identifies is "heavy-handed state intervention" that would foreclose this option.

A human being is more than the sum of his genetic inheritance. His value from conception onward depends not on inherited strengths and weaknesses, but on his unique identity. He is always worthy of respect whatever physical limitations exist.

Current law and practice accord some individuals (pregnant mothers, abortionists, in vitro-fertilization specialists) total dominion over the lives of others. That doesn't make it right, and it doesn't justify further ventures into manipulating some human beings to meet the wishes of others.

Susan E. Wills
National Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, D.C.

THE BOOK ON GORE

The August 14 edition of NR is a masterpiece. Article after article on Weird Al, each one better than the next. I especially like the wit in the pieces written by Mark Steyn, John O'Sullivan, and Rob Long. I split my sides laughing.

Normally I circulate my copies of NR in an effort to edify the public. But this issue is a keeper.

Pete Skurkiss
Chester Township, N.J.

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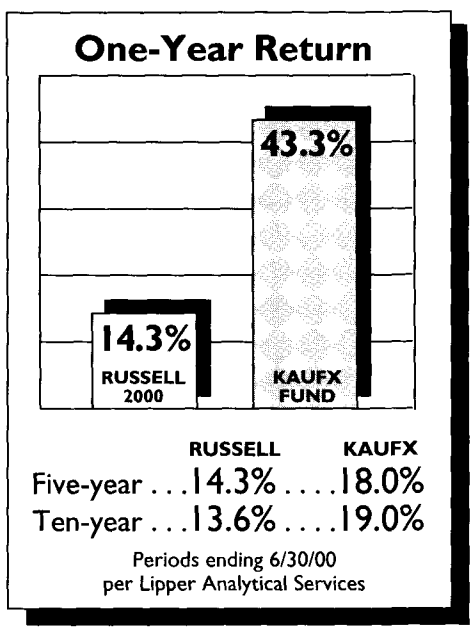

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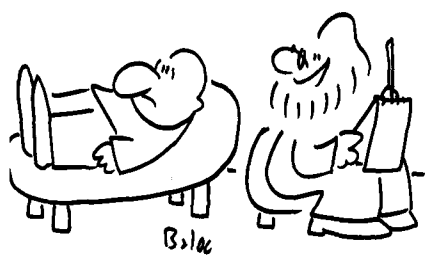
■ FOR THE RECORD ■

■ In CNN/*USA Today* poll, **George W. Bush** surges 17 points ahead of Vice President **Gore** following Republican National Convention—same lead **Michael Dukakis** had in same poll at same time twelve years ago. . . . Gore, on GOP convention: "Behind the flashing video wall is an agenda of rising gas prices and smog-filled skies that is of Big Oil, by Big Oil, and for Big Oil." . . . President **Clinton**: "Nearest I can tell, the message of the Bush campaign is . . . 'How bad could I be? I've been governor of Texas, my daddy was president, I own a baseball team.'" . . . President **George H. W. Bush** responds, on MSNBC: "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to wait a month, and then you give me a call. I'll give you the home number. And if he continues that, then I'm going to tell the nation what I think of him as a human being and a person." . . . Bush Sr., in *Newsweek*: "I was terrified every day [George W.] was taking off in jets. I'll tell you, [criticism of W.'s National Guard service] really irks me. Look at the guy I ran against." . . . On New Haven radio show Rep. **Chris Shays** (R., Conn.), who voted against impeachment, says he believes Clinton raped **Juanita Broaddrick** twice, based on Broaddrick disclosure sealed in impeachment "evidence room." . . . At bookstore on Martha's Vineyard, Clinton buys *From Dawn to Decadence*, by **Jacques Barzun**.

■ Gore, in *The New Yorker*: "The world is a system, not a collection of individuals." . . . Democratic party chairman **Ed Rendell**, on Sen. **Joe Lieberman** (D., Conn.), who is Jewish, before Gore picked running mate, according to Reuters: "If Joe Lieberman was Episcopalian, I think he'd almost be a slam dunk." . . . In *L.A. Times*, leftist **Robert Scheer** responds to the Lieberman pick: "What a gutless wonder Al Gore is turning out to be. Instead of rising to the defense of an administration that deserves to be celebrated, he turns for his running mate to . . . a carping Clinton critic." . . . Gore continues to boycott Democratic fundraiser at Playboy mansion during convention, but has accepted at least $8,500 in campaign cash from **Hugh Hefner** and family over last five years, reports *Washington Times*. . . . Clinton vetoes marriage-penalty tax-cut bill. . . . Michigan governor **John Engler**, in *Congressional Quarterly*: "Al Gore scares autoworkers. . . . Gore is so extreme on environmental issues." . . . In *New York Times* interview, Gore "expressed interest" in **Garry Wills**'s new book, *Papal Sin: Structure of Deceit*, and comments, "I guess I won't be able to praise his work anymore with any degree of political safety."

■ **Ron Reagan**, son of **President Reagan**, tells *Washington Post* he's voting for **Ralph Nader**, but would support Gore over Bush in a two-way race. More from the former ballet dancer: Bush is "probably the least qualified person ever to be nominated by a major party." . . . **Pat Robertson** expresses disappointment with GOP convention, on CNN: "What we're saying is we're the good Democrats and they're the bad Democrats." . . . Nader obtained floor pass at GOP convention from Pacifica Radio, roamed among delegates shortly before **Dick Cheney**'s speech, reports *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. . . . **Al Sharpton** spends day at convention with radio-talk-show host **Armstrong Williams**. . . . **Tom Cole**, Republican National Committee chief of staff, says Oklahoma governor **Frank Keating** "probably was the one" if Bush hadn't picked Cheney, according to *Oklahoman*. . . . **Colin Powell**, on whether he'd serve in a Gore administration, on *Good Morning America*: "I would have to take it under serious consideration." . . . *Philadelphia Daily News* suggests Bush might pick Pennsylvania governor **Tom Ridge** to head RNC. . . . Sen. **Connie Mack** (R., Fla.), who said months ago he didn't want to be veep nominee, tells Associated Press he's not interested in cabinet, either.



"So what if the CIA is out to get you? They've tried to get Castro, Qaddafi, Saddam Hussein . . ."

■ New senator **Zell Miller** (D., Ga.), in *Macon Telegraph*: "Anybody who thinks I'm going up there and will vote the party line or be Bill Clinton's lap dog, they don't know Zell Miller. They haven't watched me very much." He will face former senator **Mack Mattingly** in race to fill out term of late senator **Paul Coverdell**. . . . Sen. **Robert Torricelli** (D., N.J.) pulls out of 2001 governor's race three weeks after getting in. . . . **Marlene Dietrich** had White House tryst with **JFK**, according to journals of late critic **Kenneth Tynan** published in *The New Yorker*. . . . **Peggy Noonan**, **Marlin Fitzwater** join advisers to NBC's *West Wing*. . . . Michigan appellate court blocks county judge's decision to force Department of Corrections to open doors to **Barbara Walters** for interview with inmate **Jack Kevorkian**. . . . Children's Defense Fund considers suing RNC and Bush campaign over use of trademarked motto "Leave No Child Behind."

■ **Fidel Castro** praises "profound convictions" of **Abraham Lincoln**, "wisdom and statesmanship" of **FDR**, and "ethics" of **Jimmy Carter**. Of Bush and Gore, he says, "Perhaps never . . . have we seen two such boring and insipid characters, devoid of historical endorsement, and solid criteria and principles, as those who today compete for the leadership of the hegemonic superpower." . . . Israel and Palestinians reject Vatican call for international control of Jerusalem holy sites. . . . Iran integrates women into Tehran fire department. . . . Graverobbers in Spain steal skull of anti-pope **Benedict XIII**, who split church in 14th century, and demand ransom.

■ RNC co-chairman **Pat Harrison**, on MSNBC: "The big question is, Will Bill Clinton let Al Gore take the training wheels off of his tricycle and run for president?" **NR**

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I hope you'll help the NRA restore gun ownership and the shooting sports to their rightful, respected place in mainstream American life. *And if you won't, please let me know why.* **I'm The NRA.**

Charlton Heston
Actor

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Wayne LaPierre, NRA Executive Vice President

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THE WEEK

■ The Republican convention featured 32-year-old California state assemblyman Abel Maldonado, giving a seven-minute speech entirely in Spanish. If he progresses at the rate of students in present-day bilingual-education classes, Sr. Maldonado should be giving a speech in fractured Spanglish by about 2012.

■ Brian McGrory, writing in the *Boston Globe*, gushes that Ted Kennedy is "the most influential legislator this state has ever known." Oh, yeah? Let the roll be called. John Quincy Adams. Henry Cabot Lodge. Charles Sumner. Daniel Webster . . . Otherwise, spot-on.

■ There's a curious criticism being made of George W. Bush's attempts to appeal to minority voters. These attempts are said to be insincere. Bush is not really trying to appeal to black and Hispanic voters, the argument goes, so much as he is trying to win over white voters who want to see him make the effort. What exactly is the critics' point? Is it that Bush does not truly want many blacks and Hispanics to vote for him? That he would prefer to get no votes from blacks or Hispanics? That it is illegitimate to offer assurances to white voters who want Bush to show that he will govern with the interests of the whole country in mind? Or is it merely that when it comes to race, no Republican good deed can go unpunished?

■ Prof. Sean Wilentz of Princeton gave George W. Bush a little lecture after his acceptance speech. Bush better "bone up on his American history," Wilentz wrote, since he jokingly claimed that George Washington's friends called him "George W.," when in fact the Father of His Country was a sober fellow. Speaking of boning up, would this be the same Prof. Wilentz who told us during the impeachment crisis that Bill Clinton was just like Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson?

■ Before Dick Cheney spoke at the Republican convention, delegates might have been excused for believing there would be a coronation this November rather than an election—so rarely were the names Clinton and Gore mentioned from the Philadelphia stage. But then Cheney did name names, and gently criticized: "These have been years of prosperity in our land, but little purpose in the White House. . . . It is time for them to go." The audience loved it, and the media—yearning for some drama that did not exist—went into one of their conniptions. "Is Dick Cheney too much of a carnivore?" blurted NBC's Claire Shipman. Sam Donaldson, Ted Koppel, Brian Williams—just about anybody sitting in a skybox and facing a TV camera—accused Cheney of throwing out "red meat" to the GOP faithful. Katie Couric pronounced the speech "nasty." All this for a few mild barbs, the promise of "a stiff dose of truth" in Washington, and a funny line about the Man from Hope going home to New York. By convention standards, it was pretty conventional stuff. Cheney could hardly have delivered his speech without some reference to the current administration. Yet there's a lesson in the press response: Even when Bush and Cheney don't misspeak, they will be attacked.

■ So Mary Cheney, one of the veep nominee's daughters, is a lesbian. This fact has occasioned a number of news stories dwelling on her father's "antigay" voting record in Congress. The premise seems to be that there is something hypocritical in disapproving of an aspect of a person's life while loving the person nonetheless. Actually, the argument is even weaker than that, since the votes in question do not necessarily reflect moral disapproval of homosexuality. There are all sorts of reasons one might oppose hate-crime laws, as Cheney does, and many of those reasons are persuasive to some homosexuals themselves. If there is a lesson to be drawn from the Cheneys' family life, it is that it is wrong to apply the label "antigay" to anyone who objects to the public-policy agenda of GLAAD.

■ It became almost a sport, the week of the Republican convention, to await the headlines in the next day's *New York Times*. What new way would the Grey Lady find to express her disdain? The *Times* hit the GOP's style ("No Decisions, No Drama"; "Grand Old Packaging"; "Scripted Emptiness"), its consistency ("Absolute Freedom to Stick to the Script"), and its honesty ("Courting of Voting Bloc Poses Question of Motive"; "The Republican Party's Exercise in Minstrelsy"). But the best came on the morning of the last day: "Attacks on Gore Begin." The horror. The thought occurs: Was the *Times* so touchy-squealy because it feared W. might win?

■ Coverage of the convention in Philadelphia often dwelt on the contrast to that *other* convention, the nasty, intolerant one Republicans had supposedly held in Houston in 1992. According to legend, the strident social conservatism and partisan anger displayed in Houston turned voters off. Patrick Buchanan's speech observing that America was engaged in a "culture war" (not, as is often said, declaring such a war) is usually cited. Was Buchanan's formulation more provocative than Jesse Jackson's description of King

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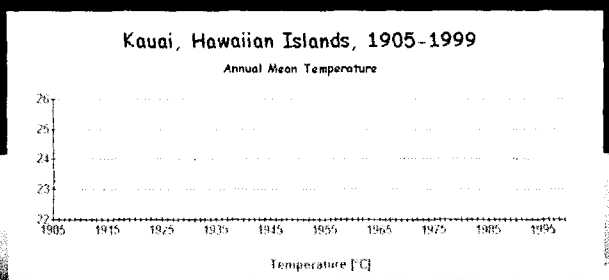
Global warming? Not here.



A 94-year record of surface-based temperatures, compiled by NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, shows that there is no evidence of a warming trend in Kauai, in the Hawaiian Islands. But wait, if global warming does exist, it should be evident here in Hawaii? And elsewhere around the world? The truth is that the "surface temperature record" used to characterize global warming shows a false trend. The Greening Earth Society provides weekly updates from temperature monitoring stations around the world. Examine the data and decide for yourself whether America is being misled. Visit **www.greeningearthsociety.org**

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Herod, at the Democratic convention that year, as "the Dan Quayle of his day"? There was nothing remotely vicious about Ronald Reagan's speech in Houston, or Phil Gramm's, or Bill Bennett's, or Condoleezza Rice's. Nor is it true that the convention hurt President Bush. Depending on which poll is consulted, Bush got a bounce of five (Gallup) or seven (NBC/*Wall Street Journal*) points, which is just about average. What hurt Bush was his unwillingness to defend Houston when the media criticized it. Republicans have not bothered to correct the record subsequently, which is why Frank Rich can toss off a casual reference to journalists' memories of "a Nazi speech" by Buchanan.

■ An early washout from the Democratic veepstakes was Indiana senator Evan Bayh. Bayh is against partial-birth abortion, which means that the party that wants to save the nation from anti-abortion extremists cannot tolerate him. Even in early speculation, Bayh was singled out as a likely loser because of his abortion stand. And so it proved. Democratic moderates cannot be moderate on this issue, if they aspire to their party's highest honors.

■ ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE SCIENCES (Nicholas Lemann interviews Al Gore for *The New Yorker*). "Gore gestured for another piece of paper, and when I gave one to him he bent over the coffee table again and began to draw another diagram. . . . This second drawing was made up of a circle with twenty little dots floating inside it, connected by wavy lines. 'Now, let me come back to your question.' He walked me through Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, apologizing for the overused word 'paradigm,' and explained that every so often an unusually creative scientist finds a new way to connect the dots of unexplained data. . . . 'It appears in fractal theory. If you look at a map of the coastline of New Jersey, and then magnify it a hundred times, and then magnify that a thousand times, the basic design of the ins and outs of the coastline will be the same at every level of magnification. And they call that the self-sameness principle. I don't understand it. It's way beyond my depth. But I do believe that there's something about our world that—' He began another long pause. 'I'm searching for the right word here—that *manifests* that self-sameness principle in a lot of different ways. And when we find a brand-new understanding of the world that comes out of a powerful new discovery in science, it often allows us to look at social and political matters and find ways to connect the dots that haven't made sense before.' I asked Gore where God fits into all this. 'Give me another piece of paper,' he said." Makes drinking at Deke look like a not-bad way to spend college.

■ Pat Buchanan approaches the Reform-party nomination like the hero of *Hollow Man*—is his skeleton still left, or has that vanished too? The three-time losing GOP candidate threatened to shake the pillars of the two-party system when he bolted to Ross Perot's Reform party, but the only candidate he's in a tight race with now is Libertarian Harry Browne (polls show them both under 2 percent). To win the nomination, Buchanan must surmount disgruntled Perotistas and John Hagelin, a devotee of Eastern meditation. If, as expected, he wins, he must struggle to win attention for a message whose left (isolation, protection, railing against corporations) has been co-opted by Ralph Nader, and whose right ("Bay, where did we put those pro-life bumper stickers?") seems adequately represented by Bush-Cheney. A sharp wordsmith, a lively personality, and a bonny fighter, Buchanan became enamored of the limelight. And now he has lost that too.

■ Like a dog marking a tree, President Clinton will hand out a few Medals of Freedom as he prepares to depart the White House. One of them, fittingly, goes to Jesse Jackson. Jackson came to national prominence by lying about his presence at the side of the murdered Martin Luther King. His day job, before he got into politics, was threatening white corporations with boycotts unless they dealt with black businessmen, then shaking down the black businessmen whom he had set up (a Jackson line from the period: "If you want to play, you got to pay"). Beginning in the Eighties, he began shaking down the Democratic party, making symbolic runs for president, for which he would be rewarded with the resources for fancy "voter registration" campaigns. He never hesitated to invoke religion to abuse his rivals and back his friends; he has called Dan Quayle "Herod," and George W. Bush "Pontius Pilate," while protectively counseling the Clintons during the Lewinsky debacle. On the road, he has befriended dictators and tyrants—Fidel Castro, Omar Torrijos, Yasser Arafat, and, perhaps most astonishingly, Charles Taylor and Foday Sankoh of Liberia and Sierra Leone respectively: men who have unleashed on their countries armies of drugged teenagers who rape, murder, and chop the arms off women and babies, all in order to batten on the diamond market. Clinton named Jackson a special envoy to Africa; Jackson's diplomacy enabled Taylor and Sankoh to widen their depredations. Even if it should turn out that none of their blood money has trickled into Jackson's coffers, his conduct has been grossly irresponsible. Jackson, who probably can't point to Liberia on a map, has said nothing about the fruits of his efforts.

■ First during the WTO meeting in Seattle, then during the Republican convention in Philadelphia, the streets filled with riotous slackers; no doubt the spectacle will be repeated at the Democratic convention in Los Angeles. They call themselves anarchists, and the papers have run features on the latest flavor of street theater. We should do anarchism the courtesy of taking it seriously. Communism fought organized Anarchism as a rival (most openly during the Spanish Civil War) and absorbed its energies. But in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was a powerful and noxious dogma. Anarchism postulated a virtuous humanity, corrupt-

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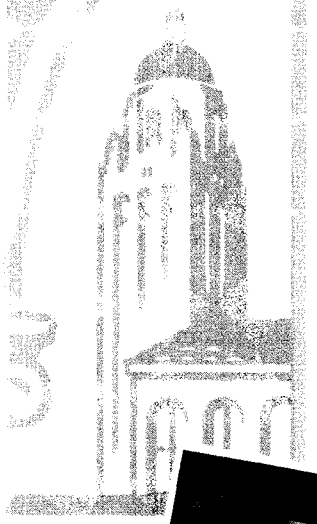
Compassionate Conditionality for Africa

Larry Diamond is a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Committee on African Studies at Stanford University.



Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

It is hard not to nod in sad agreement with *The Economist's* recent headline on Africa, "The Hopeless Continent." No region of the world is poorer, more heavily in debt, or more besieged by civil wars, refugees, famine, preventable deadly diseases, and state repression. On no continent is life more Hobbesian, quite literally, short, nasty, and brutish.

In the grip of an AIDS epidemic, life expectancy in some African countries is plunging back to precolonial levels. Many older Africans think things were better under British or French colonial rule. With some exceptions (mainly in southern Africa, primarily Botswana), the promise of independence has been squandered.

Africa has been wretchedly governed. Its now endemic political pathologies—corruption, nepotism, ethnic domination, abuse of power, decimation of the rule of law—have seeped into the culture. There are ways of reversing this tragedy, but unconditional debt forgiveness for the poorest of the poor countries is not one of them. Africa is flat broke. The nearly $400 billion it owes internationally represents three-quarters of its GDP and nearly four times its annual exports. But in many countries, the external debt—Nigeria's more than $30 billion, for example—is equaled or exceeded by what its political leaders have embezzled from the state.

Unless African countries lay the institutional foundations of limited and accountable government, under a true rule of law, they have no hope of relief from their burdens. Those institutions will not be encouraged by an unconditional debt write-off. Rather, "forgiveness" would reinforce the irresponsibility that has brought the continent to this juncture.

Africa needs the compassion of the West, but it also needs its conditionality. **Debt must only be forgiven in exchange for lasting reforms that will control corruption.** A new American president should lead the West in offering to Africa an international bargain: debt for democracy and development for good governance.

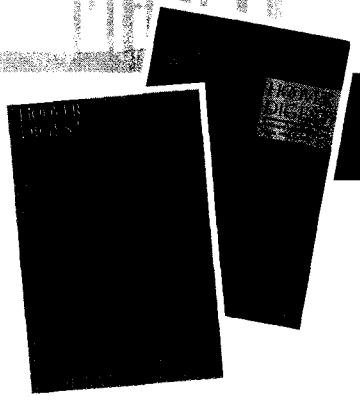
The bargain would suspend repayments on the debt of any poor country that established credible laws and independent structures to monitor the assets and conduct of public officials; to prosecute and remove corrupt officials; to audit public accounts; to insulate the judiciary from political interference or ethnic favor; to ensure public access to government information; and to protect freedom of the press and other freedoms of expression and association.

For every year a country holds to this bargain, its external debt should be reduced by 10 percent. After ten years, if the country continues to respect its own institutions, the preexisting stock of debt should be retired altogether.

Along with debt retirement, more assistance should go to train, equip, and empower the judges, lawyers, accountants, auditors, administrators, elected officials, journalists, civil society leaders, and activists necessary to make good governance a reality.

Such a bargain would help African countries lay the institutional foundations for sustainable economic growth and for attracting foreign investment outside of oil and other minerals. Only with freedom, transparency, and a rule of law can Africa escape its miseries. Only with conditionality can the West show compassion.

— Larry Diamond



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ed by government, religion, and all organized institutions, which it sought to overthrow by spectacular acts of violence or by a general strike of all workers. It was utopian in its psychology, nihilist in its postulates, destructive in its action. President William McKinley was murdered by an anarchist; so were Frederick Parmenter and Alessandro Berardelli, paymaster of a Massachusetts shoe factory and his guard, shot and robbed of $15,000. The trial and execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti for the crime became an international left-liberal cause célèbre, though the historian Francis Russell, who studied the case for years and wrote about it for NR, concluded that Sacco was indeed guilty (Vanzetti stuck by him out of revolutionary solidarity). Anarchism, like many revolutionary movements, summoned some idealism, some courage, and much ignorance, bloodlust, and will-to-power. Its return, if serious, would be no good thing.

■ The saga of Wen Ho Lee continues. Lee, as readers will recall, is the Taiwan-born scientist at the Los Alamos nuclear-weapons lab who is accused of mishandling classified data—one example, some say, of the breakdown of security at the labs, which led to the Cox Report on Chinese espionage. Now, a government agency is looking into things at Los Alamos: not the FBI, but the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The EEOC, which is also investigating California's Lawrence Livermore lab, suspects that Asian and Asian-American employees are paid less than other workers, passed over for promotions, and unfairly regarded as security risks. One worker said the EEOC's action is "a coming of age of Asian Americans." A remarkable statement, that. Yes, Asians have come to this country and succeeded in academic, business, and scientific endeavors, becoming a model of American achievement—but having the EEOC declare them victims of discrimination? Now, that's something to cheer about.

■ President Clinton vetoed a bill to eliminate the tax code's marriage penalty. He has given two justifications: 1) The bill would reduce the surplus too much, and 2) the bill should have been accompanied by a new prescription-drug benefit for seniors that would reduce the surplus further. We learned long ago that Clinton could somehow explain that night is day with an air of perfect sincerity; now he is saying it's day and night at the same time.

■ One hundred thousand new cops, 100,000 new teachers, and now 100,000 new—disabled people? President Clinton celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act in the spirit of the law, pledging to issue an executive order that federal agencies make this many fresh hires over the next five years. Engineered by Bob Dole and signed into law by President Bush, the ADA has swelled the ranks of those designated as, and rewarded for being, disabled. Driving up insurance costs, mandating insane projects like wheelchair ramps in mountaintop lodges, and fostering an industry of "civil rights" lawyers, the ADA is a monument to the regulatory state.

■ It's always fun to watch the Left squirm when respected organizations conclude, after years of study, that conservatives were right all along. This is what the American Medical Association has done, with its study showing that the most hallowed of gun-control laws, the Brady Act, has had no discernible effect on gun crimes. In an attempt at "balance," the press lapped up the comments of one of the study's authors to the effect that the Brady Act *might* have diminished gun-suicide rates among the elderly—not quite the hardened criminals we were told the act would stop.

■ The Postal Service has been talking about breaking into the e-mail business for years. Now word comes that it has been testing a variety of e-services. Some of the ideas, like being able to electronically reroute packages addressed to you, sound pretty good. But since the Postal Service has a legal monopoly in first-class mail, it could use its leverage to gain a market-distorting advantage in competition with private companies that provide e-services. No word yet from Janet Reno's trustbusters.

■ Out on the farthest shores of bad taste, whom should we find but Bill Clinton. Raising funds for Kathleen Kennedy Townsend's gubernatorial campaign, the president dropped in on Hyannis Port. Addressing a crowd that had assembled to greet him, he joked that the real object of his journey was to see Ethel Kennedy. He went on to apostrophize the family matriarch thus: "Ethel, you may have to put me up tonight—and if so that would tickle me, because Ethel's been sending me these raunchy Valentine cards for years—and I'm completely in love with her." Mrs. Kennedy's reaction to these endearments is not recorded. Neither is Hillary's. We just hope the two ladies will put party considerations first, and stay out of each other's way for a few days.

Love and Marriage

Once nimble as a mountain goat
Preparing for the rut,
Bill Clinton's veto hit old coots
Somewhere around the gut;
Young marrieds, meanwhile, shopping for
A bassinet at Sears,
A bed and marked-down Tupperware,
Glare at Al Gore's cashmeres.

—W. H. von Dreele

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Does St. Bozo's Parish No Longer Amuse You?

In many Catholic parishes today, the sense of the sacred — of mystery and majesty and even of worship itself — has largely been banished. The bells, incense, votive candles, and Communion rail are gone. The Tabernacle with the reserved Sacrament can't be found. Elegant statues of our friends, the saints, are locked in the basement, replaced by balloons, banners with greeting-card sentiments, and other dime-store decorations. The organ gathers cobwebs. The sanctuary has become a stage. And the kneelers are now being ripped out, the crucifix taken down.

It's virtually impossible to pray before (or after) Mass because of all the chatter and backslapping. The Creed is left unsaid. Homilists pander with (unfunny) jokes and (not quite the latest) pop-psychology blather. The words of the liturgy are improvised upon by politically-correct clerics and lectors with weird agendas — God our Father becomes "God our Parent," the Son of God becomes the "Child of God," etc. And we must clap, clap, clap for the band and the liturgical dancers and the clowns — we aren't making a joyful noise unto the Lord, but only unto the (amateurish) entertainers.

In many parishes the primary purpose of the Mass has been transformed from receiving Christ and worshiping the Almighty into "celebrating community" — i.e., celebrating our wonderful selves. One influential liturgical "expert" has said the Mass shouldn't convey "a feeling of infinity or eternity or the world beyond," for it's really about "communal sensitivity" among parishioners. But touchie-feelie Catholicism — where the Sign of Peace seems to be the high point of the Mass — has no power or magnetism. Not many people get out of bed on Sunday morning in search of warm huggies.

Catholics who are alienated by trivialized or freakish Masses — who are sick of being guinea pigs in a liturgical lab — often jump ship for an Evangelical church, or just stay in bed. Indeed, church attendance among Catholics has dropped from 70%, just before the liturgical experiments began, to 25% today! And today, two out of three Catholics don't believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist — which isn't surprising, given that *how* we worship has a profound effect on *what* we believe about the meaning of the Mass.

The liturgical experiments have largely been a miserable failure. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a monthly orthodox Catholic magazine, agree with Cardinal Ratzinger that our damaged liturgy needs to be repaired. We articulate the Catholic Faith in all its splendor and truth. We don't just chronicle liturgical horror stories, we cover the full range of issues of concern to orthodox Catholics. According to *The Catholic Answer*, we're having "a notable impact" for the good on our deeply troubled Church. Subscribe today and take heart!

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■ The Belfast "Good Friday" Agreement of 1998 was a carefully balanced package of mutual concessions, among them that Britain would release paramilitary prisoners while the paramilitaries would disarm and commit to constitutional methods for advancing their causes. The score so far on prisoners: over 400 released, many having served only brief sentences for crimes of breathtaking inhumanity. On disarmament: guns decommissioned—zero; rounds of ammunition surrendered—zero; pounds of Semtex explosive handed over—zero. In fact, last month a shipment of weapons en route to anti-agreement Republicans was seized by police in Croatia. The shipment is believed to be part of a larger haul that made it to Ireland. Now, swollen with audacity, terrorist front men like Gerry Adams are demanding the release of IRA operatives jailed in the Irish Republic for murdering Irish policemen. It is all so very predictable. The government punctiliously carries out its side of the bargain; the terrorists ignore theirs. When their bad faith is quietly pointed out to them, the terrorists retreat behind legalisms; when it is openly challenged, they threaten to take up their arms again; when it drives public opinion against the "peace process," they demand a renegotiation of terms. A slide into appeasement is inevitable when a weak, well-intentioned liberal democracy enters into an agreement with terrorist revolutionaries.

■ In a city park in Santa Fe, there's a fountain that depicts a brother and sister playing—she's aiming at him with a garden hose; he's about to squirt her with a water pistol. Unveiled in 1979, the statue has lately been the target of vandals, who have scrawled "NO GUN" on the boy's legs. The sculptor, who modeled the figures after her own children, now plans to chisel off the boy's hand and make him a new one, so that he too will be holding a hose. Residents of Santa Fe will breathe easy at last. In Baltimore, plans for a mural of Harriet Tubman at the downtown headquarters of the Associated Black Charities were shelved because she was to be shown carrying a musket. Maybe they should have given her a hose.

■ "In fairness to Bush and his supporters, there's no evidence any of them seriously wish to restore the American society that existed before the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865—that is, a society where it was legal for one human being to own another."—Christopher B. Daly in *The American Prospect*. Daly "teaches writing and American journalism history at Boston University."

■ Alec Guinness was an actor who could do it all—comedy, tragedy, the old and the new, on stage and on screen in a versatile and Oscar-rewarded career. Born illegitimate in 1914, he never had an easy time. With a flattish and very British face, he looked a bit like the naval officer he had been in the war, driving a landing craft. Through natural talent, he came to seem whatever part he was playing. "One became an actor to escape from oneself," he liked to say. Yet the self was always there, projecting the human condition, its joys and distresses. Guinness was reflective, modest, a fine writer and memoirist, a Catholic who daily quoted a verse from Psalms: "Cause me to hear your loving kindness in the morning." His favorite pastime, he said, was "sitting in dappled sunlight, having lunch with two or three chums." Married for 64 years, he adored his wife and their son. They don't come like that anymore. R.I.P.

PHILADELPHIA

The Big Speech

GIVEN the Republican party's hunger to win the presidential race this year, George W. Bush could probably have elicited cheers from the audience with a call to nationalize the banks. In fact, he gave a speech that deserved the applause it got, both from the delegates and even from the media.

On the major issues, Bush was impeccably conservative. He made or sketched the moral case for school choice, missile defense, tax cuts, restrictions on abortion, and free-market reform of Social Security. His only programmatic concession was his support for a prescription-drug benefit for seniors, and Republicans in Washington had thrown in the towel on that months before.

The speech was not, of course, primarily about policy. It was about character: Bush's own, his generation's, his country's. He offered an interpretation of American history and situated his candidacy within it. The Founders, he said, quoting Frost, had wanted "to occupy the land with character." He suggested that he better reflected this "decent and daring" spirit than Al Gore, with his "politics of the roadblock" and "philosophy of the stop sign." He argued that his generation had lost sight of the importance of character, but was beginning to rediscover it. He presented his candidacy as an opportunity for generational redemption: "Our generation has a chance to reclaim some essential values—to show we have grown up before we grow old."

If Bush's speech was an expression of conservatism, it was also an advance for it. By acknowledging that his had not been a wholly destructive generation ("My generation tested limits—and our country, in some ways, is better for it"), Bush made conservatism more relevant to, and thus effective in, today's circumstances. Rather than scold American decadence, he promised American renewal.

Even appreciative commentators have misunderstood Bush's concern with character, assuming that he has President Clinton's sexual immorality in mind. But what Bush and Dick Cheney discussed was the *political* character of Clinton and Al Gore: their war-room mentality, their legalistic evasions, their lack of leadership. By voting for the Republican ticket, they said, Americans could say goodbye to all that.

One weakness in their case was that they spoke as though

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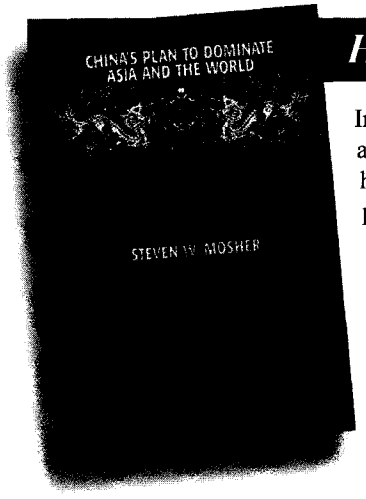
Get serious.



Hegemon by Steven W. Mosher

In ***Hegemon***, Steven W. Mosher shows how the quest for domination has been something like an art form in Chinese statecraft, an enduring feature on the country's mysterious face that is often hidden from the West. In his hands, Chinese history and culture opens a window onto Beijing's plans for expansion and conquest.

As timely as today's headlines about Chinese efforts to influence U.S. elections and steal U.S. nuclear secrets, ***Hegemon*** is a wakeup call to those dreaming of a "strategic partnership." It is also a masterful work of scholarship that reinforces Steven Mosher's reputation as one of our most thoughtful and provocative China watchers.

"***Hegemon*** is more valuable than a hundred CIA briefings."

– Congressman Dana Rohrabacher

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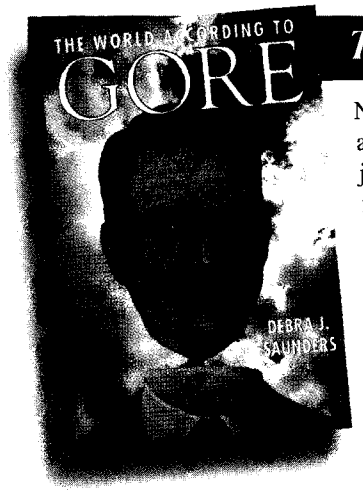
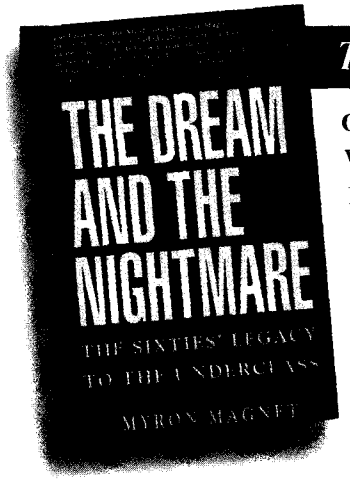


The World According to Gore by Debra J. Saunders

No writer takes Al Gore more seriously than nationally syndicated columnist Debra J. Saunders. In a guided tour of Goredom, Saunders follows the curves and switch-backs of Gore's intellectual journey—from Global Warming foe to wheeler-dealer at global environmental conferences; from pro-life to pro-choice; from someone who chopped and hoed it to the scourge of tobacco; from pro-NRA to anti-gun; from Mr. Clean to No Controlling Legal Authority; from theology school to the Buddhist Temple.

In ***The World According to Gore***, Saunders has taken Gore apart, put him back together again, and provided the reader with an insight into the politician he is and the president he would be.

224 pages, paper, $15.95



The Dream and The Nightmare by Myron Magnet

On January 5, 2000, the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* asked Governor George Bush what was the most important book he'd ever read, aside from the Bible.

Here's what Bush said:

"***The Dream and the Nightmare*** by Myron Magnet crystallized for me the impact the failed culture of the Sixties had on our values and society. It helped create dependency on government, undermined family, and eroded values which had stood the test of time and which are critical if we want a decent and hopeful tomorrow for every single American."

In a front page article on June 12, 2000, the New York Times referred to ***The Dream and the Nightmare*** book as one of the "first building blocks of the 'compassionate conservative' platform."

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Americans already accepted it. "The wait has been long, but it won't be long now," Bush said. He addressed the public as though it had experienced the last eight years as a long national nightmare. It's a risky rhetorical gambit. And Bush gave Gore some openings: He said nothing about the economy and nothing specific about foreign policy.

But Bush was shrewd to belittle Gore rather than attack him frontally. Bush's apparent calculation is that, as in the primaries, the man who looks like a winner will win. He looks like a winner now—and his speech in Philadelphia only reinforced that impression.

PHILADELPHIA II

Winners & Losers

THERE were, happily, more winners than losers at this convention. **George W. Bush**, of course, was the big winner, universally acclaimed for having pulled off a convention free of dissension and appealing to voters. He wisely refrained from picking fights with pro-lifers over the platform, having learned from Bob Dole's mistake in 1996. He looked presidential delivering a fine speech at convention's end and left Philadelphia with a head of steam.

Other Bushes also came out ahead. Democrats criticized Gov. Bush for relying too much on "Daddy," former **President Bush**. The younger Bush, recognizing that most Americans think well of his father and of the idea of asking fathers for advice, did not take the bait by going out of his way to prove his independence. **Laura Bush**, meanwhile, was impressively poised while giving the reassuring impression that she is not running to be Hillary's successor.

Three other speakers also shone. **John McCain**, in a typically poignant speech, erased any doubts about his public commitment to the Republican ticket. **Condoleezza Rice** made it clear that she will be an asset to the Bush administration. And **Vito Fossella**, the only straight white male congressman allowed to speak in prime time, was able to make entitlement reform sound exciting.

Speaking of speeches, the Bush speechwriting team—**Mike Gerson**, **Matthew Scully**, and **John McConnell**—did an excellent job. The speeches by Bush and Cheney were not only eloquent and conservative; they fit the personality and diction of the speakers, and even managed to maintain consistent themes.

Arianna Huffington must also be counted a winner. Her "shadow convention" may not have shed any light on the issues it supposedly concerned. But it certainly got the publicity that was always its real purpose.

Chief among the losers were **Ann Stone**, **Christine Todd Whitman**, and the rest of the shrinking pro-abortion faction of the GOP. With fewer delegates than last time and a presidential campaign not intimidated by her, Stone was sidelined. And Whitman, hailed by the media as the future of the party a few years ago, was a nonentity in Philadelphia.

If the platform came out well for the Bush campaign and for conservatives, it was no credit to the man who was supposed to be superintending it: Wisconsin governor **Tommy Thompson**. He kept trying to pull the platform left, on everything from Internet taxes to gay rights. And he made a procedural mistake that handed pro-abortionists a temporary victory. The Bush campaign had to intervene repeatedly to save him from his folly.

Elizabeth Dole bombed at the convention, her vapid speech numbing it like a shot of Novocain: painless yet somehow still uncomfortable. **Tom Ridge**'s speech went over better, but it came only after he had displayed his petulance over not having been chosen as veep—he told reporters, ludicrously, that he had not wanted the position.

Since the convention was successful, the biggest losers are **Al Gore** and **Bill Clinton**. Gore enters the Democratic convention needing simultaneously to rally his base, appeal to swing voters, and attack Bush without being unpleasant. Good luck. Clinton has to be worried. If his term ends with Republicans in control of both the White House and Congress, he will have to be judged a more disastrous leader for the Democrats than even Michael Dukakis.

THE DEMOCRATS

Being Joe Lieberman

AT his unveiling as Al Gore's vice-presidential candidate in Nashville, Joe Lieberman exhibited all the puppy-dog enthusiasm of Dan Quayle, showing a bit too much of the personal delight of a lifelong politico making it onto a national ticket. But the press didn't play it that way—which is one of the great advantages of being Joe Lieberman. Gore's pick, at least in the near term, seems shrewd. Lieberman is respected by the national media and by many of his Republican colleagues. Then, there's the "history"—flogged relentlessly by the Democrats—of putting a Jew on the national ticket, although in contemporary America—measured by electoral risk and significance to the nation—this bears closer resemblance to Walter Mondale's selection of Geraldine Ferraro than it does to JFK's run for the presidency.

Lieberman has forged a unique, and very difficult, political identity, managing to break with his party's orthodoxy on questions such as school choice and entitlements, and at the same time compiling an utterly reliable Democratic voting record. He pulls off this trick mostly through his temperament, manner, and rhetoric. He's the conscientious Democrat, willing to talk about God and values. He has made tough votes—for instance, in favor of the Gulf War—but his reputation rests mainly on his words, on his scolding of the White House during the fundraising hearings, his jawboning of Hollywood, and, of course, his famous rebuke of President Clinton for having his way with the White House interns.

This last is particularly telling. NR's James Burnham used to insist that "Who says A, must say B" (or, as they say in

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Yiddish, "You can't dance at two weddings at the same time"). Lieberman is a genius at A, but rarely makes it to B. What good was his outrage at Clinton if he shrank from calling for his removal or resignation? What good is his agonizing over abortion if he reasons that all abortion is horrific and then determines that even the most horrific procedure—partial-birth abortion—should be legal?

That said, by Washington standards, Lieberman is still a remarkably thoughtful and creative politician. When Al Gore wrote in *Earth in the Balance* that he was sick of poll-driven attack politics and wanted to become something different, Joe Lieberman might have been a nice model. But before Gore could follow through on this particular transformation, Bill Clinton came calling. Eight years later, the vice president is red of tooth and claw, generally regarded as a cynical, attack politician. And now he's come calling for Lieberman, and the exigencies of national Democratic politics are already leaving their imprint. Even before he had appeared with Gore in Nashville, Lieberman was attacking Republicans in front of an union audience. Months ago, the Gore campaign had him sign essentially a self-denunciation, disavowing any interest in reforming Social Security. The most lasting effect of this pick may be that it takes some of the shine off being Joe Lieberman.

■ NOTES & ASIDES ■

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: I am surprised that both you and your correspondent Mr. Tonucci were able to perceive so clearly the bases for taxing the entertainment industry (July 3), but failed to point out the rationale for doing so: It's clear that the taxes are needed to offset the costs to government of prosecuting malefactors and counseling those made depraved by what they have seen and heard.

Doesn't that sound reasonable?

Cordially,
Kenneth M. Berg
Miami, Fla.

Dear Mr. Berg: It certainly does, like free health.

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: The July 17 issue contained an inquiry about verbs like "fetch" and "opine," which imply two separate actions or states.

I wonder if the writer was thinking of those words that are their own antonyms: "Cleave," "ravel," "sanction," "seed," "dust," "scan," and "peruse" are among those words that can be understood only in context.

William Safire once referred to them as "two-way words."

Yours truly,
Elizabeth J. Doocey
Jamaica, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Buckley: For the information of J. Walter Lynch, whose letter concerned verbs with opposite meanings: Probably 25 other people have responded, but here is an example (from *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage* by Bryan A. Garner) of such a word:

"*cleave*, v.t., (1) to divide or separate, split; or (2) to adhere to firmly. In other words, it has opposite meanings."

Sincerely,
Jean M. Hawkes, M.D.
Marco Island, Fla.

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: Since you believe that all abortions are the taking of human life—murder—do you also believe that all those who *ever* took part in an abortion—doctors, women, nurses, etc.—should be indicted for murder or as accessories to murder (a crime without a statute of limitations)?

If not, why not?

Sincerely,
Jerry Steinman
West Nyack, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Steinman: You don't indict for murder someone who engaged in legal activity. And you would not wish to indict for "murder" someone who thought himself (herself) engaged in nothing more pernicious than herbicide.

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: In the July 17 issue you define "postmodern" by the phrase "post-Western thought." Your phrase is a notch less informative than the word itself. Postmodern clearly refers to someone, or something, that isn't here yet. Certainly not all here.

Regards,
Albert Weaver
Tucson, Ariz.

Dear Mr. Buckley: Mr. Blilie asked for the meaning of "postmodern" (bread) and you gave him "post-Western thought" (a stone). It's a question I've had for a long time, but I haven't found a clear answer. The best I can guess is that "postmodern" is academic jargon for whatever I happen to like or believe today, which is not to be subjected to rational analysis, and thus cannot be refuted, or even denied, by you. Whatever you say about it, I can simply reply, "That's an interesting take," as I slide away from the threat of dialogue.

Bill Clinton has been our first postmodern president. He stinks to high heaven, but is surrounded by a chorus of sycophants intoning, "What a wonderful odor!"

Wayne Hagood
Huntsville, Ala.

Dear Mr. Hagood: Okay, different people mean different things by "postmodern," but (one gathers) it means for many a reverse direction, as in the renewal of form in architecture. That sort of thing. I don't really think it would apply to Mr. Clinton, but help yourself.

Cordially,

—WFB

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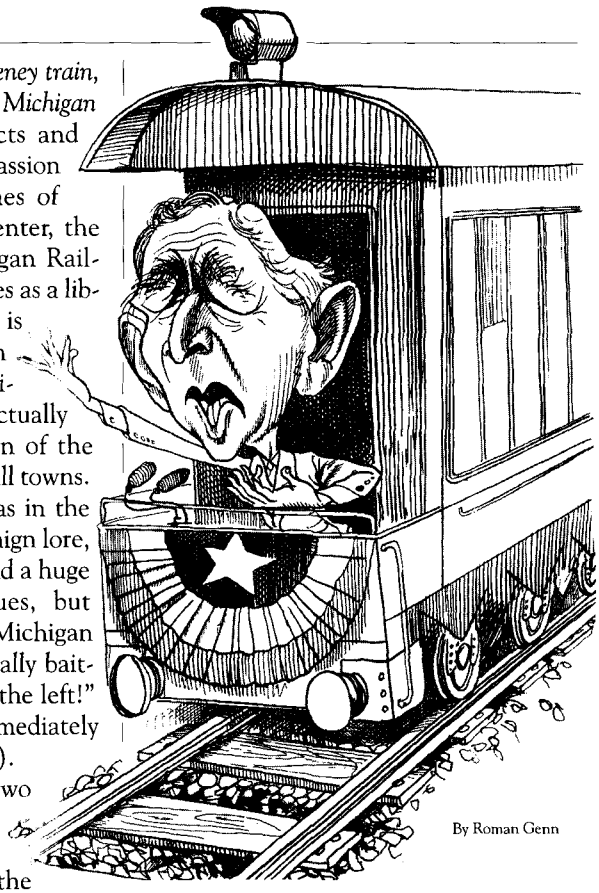
■ CAMPAIGN 2000 ■

The Post-Philly Express

Bush on a roll

RICHARD LOWRY



Aboard the Bush-Cheney train, in Michigan

AFTER a week of R&B acts and Latin singers and "compassion videos" in the muggy confines of Philadelphia's First Union Center, the Bush rally outside the Michigan Railroad Museum in Durand, comes as a liberation. The railroad building is not "authentic"—like so much of the made-for-video contrivance of Philadelphia—but actually authentic, a low-slung station of the sort you see in hundreds of small towns. The sky may not be as "big" as in the Midland, Texas, of Bush campaign lore, but it's blue and expansive. And a huge crowd isn't taking stage cues, but singing dueling Michigan and Michigan State fight songs and occasionally baiting reporters ("The press is to the left!" shouts the throng standing immediately to the right of the media stand).

Bush arrives when the first two cars of his train—two elegant burgundy Norfolk Southern cars—inch out from behind the station. W. is jacketless, in a white shirt and tie, waving from a platform. The crowd shakes red, white, and blue pom-poms, and another train engine parked near the station lets out high, long blasts from its whistle. Phrases from W.'s convention speech are painted on signs at his every stop: "Help Is On the Way," "Not Long Now," "Honesty Is NOT a Risky Scheme." The success of that speech has given Bush himself a bounce. For the first time, he seems almost electric on the stump, mixing phrases from his convention address into his traditional campaign material, hitting his applause lines just right in rousing crowd-pleasers.

Dick Cheney is the perfect straight man for W., affectless, delivering his brief introductory remarks in a monotone, like William Shatner singing in a Priceline ad. In Durand, when a "It won't be long now!" chant goes up from the crowd as he speaks, Cheney chuckles, seeming embarrassed at the silliness of it all. In comparison, Bush sounds like William Jennings Bryan, nearly shouting from the first word. Today, he is flailing at Al Gore for going along with President Clinton's veto of the marriage-penalty bill. "Instead of standing on the side of families," Bush says, "he stands on the side of big government. If I had been president, I would have *signed that bill*." A roar from the crowd, and chants of "Bush! Bush! Bush!" W. starts to speak again, but thinks better of it and pauses to let the chant run its course.

Then he dives in again: "Our campaign says *listen* to those workers that are UAW workers, *listen* to the teachers, *listen* to the Americans who are working their hearts out to feed their families. There's a clear difference: We believe that people ought to be trusted with their own money. It's *conservative* to cut taxes! It's *compassionate* to share money with the people who pay the bills!" *Bush! Bush! Bush!* The pom-poms are thrashing away. It's one of the few instances on the campaign trail with Bush when the only appropriate commentary is: *Wow.*

Bush came barreling out of Philadelphia dubbed a new kind of Republican by much of the media, but hit the tracks with an old kind of Republican message. At four Michigan whistle stops, he pounds—along with the usual pablum about how proud he is of Cheney and Laura Bush—on taxes, rebuilding the military, education reform and local control of schools, and cleansing Washington of Clinton-Gore. His stump spiel could be delivered by Tom DeLay—except Bush is riling up crowds in the name of Washington comity. Bush swears that he is waging his campaign to make love, not war.

Small "Change the Tone" signs are affixed high somewhere at every Bush rally. In his convention speech, W. disavowed any interest in the partisan fights in Washington of the last two years. This galls impeachment purists who apparently believe that if the House managers could rush just once more into the breach to explain *it's not the adultery, it's the perjury*, Clinton would finally get his historical deserts. The Bush campaign, though, wants to leverage the very public sentiments that helped Clinton thrive during impeachment—a distaste for partisanship and political argument altogether—into a case against the president and his successor. The problem with Clinton, according to this thinking, is that he has created a nasty atmosphere in Washington, a fatal embrace of Clintonistas and Clinton-haters that, among other things, has forced voters to think too much about Bill Clinton.

This is no doubt a "soft" anti-Clinton argument. But it's enough for party regulars. When Dick Cheney deadpans his "We're all a little tired of the Clinton-Gore routine," crowds burst into "No More Gore!" There is a tinderbox enthusiasm to Bush's post-convention crowds. At a Pontiac rally, Bush supporters who showed up an hour early prac-

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tice their chants in anticipation of his arrival. In tiny Schoolcraft, 7,500 people jam into a wedge of a rail yard. Boy Scouts stand on the roof of a truck. Kids clamber up the sides of idle railroad cars for a view. It might be the most fervent GOP campaign event since John McCain's crowds in New Hampshire. From the top of a double-decker car with huge windows as the Bush train pulls in, one reporter skeptical of Bush can't help marveling at the tightly packed crowd, tinged with the blue of Bush signs: "*Look* at that!"

The security of Bush's base makes it easier for him to reach out to independents and Democrats. Gone are the days in South Carolina when Bush disavowed even having anything to say to Democrats. In Durand, he's introduced by a member of UAW Local 659 whose father introduced JFK at a Flint, Mich., rally 40 years ago. "This is a campaign that welcomes Democrats," Bush enthuses after the introduction. "Our message isn't just a Republican message. Our message speaks to working people from all walks of life. And for all the union members out there, come on into this campaign!" Bush's ostentatious bipartisanship works on almost every level—it fits his Texas record, it has an anti-Clinton-Gore edge, and, of course, it has potential appeal to independents and Democrats.

How much is W. giving away to make this appeal? His education agenda is a mixed bag, as he's surrendered on the spending front; he's capitulated on prescription drugs; he's actively bad on immigration, race preferences, and bilingual education. But he is firm on abortion and guns, strong on taxes, bold and innovative on entitlements and missile defense, and he's waging his own redeemed-baby-boomer version of the culture war. Listen closely enough to his convention acceptance speech and there's a (very thin) anti-government line running throughout, as government can't be trusted to take our tax money, provide for our retirement—or infuse the country with generosity and responsibility.

"We get to see the great strengths of America," Bush says on the stump. "It lies not in the halls of government, but in the heartland of America." And the Bush train provides a perfect backdrop for the sentiment. It does "slow rolls" through Michigan towns too small to rank a full-fledged stop, as gauzy clichés of Americana straight from a Bruce Springsteen or John Cougar Mellencamp video pass by: pick-up trucks stopped at railroad crossings with kids hanging out the windows waving Bush-Cheney signs; a girl peering over her wooden backyard fence; a red fire-truck blocking off an intersection so a cluster of Bush supporters can wave their American flags; two doughy older women who have set up lawn chairs on a patch of grass, chatting, then waving as the train rolls on.

In the immediate aftermath of Philadelphia, Bush is campaigning on the sunrise side of the mountain. **NR**

■ **CAMPAIGN 2000 II** ■

Hauntings, Visions

The civil religion of John McCain

RAMESH PONNURU

A MINOR controversy broke out at the 1992 Republican convention in Houston over a sentence in the party platform calling America "the last best hope for man on earth." The sentence had clearly been inserted as innocuous boilerplate. But some evangelical Christians objected: The world's last, best hope, they said, was Jesus Christ. President Bush's political aides rolled their eyes—there they go again, those fundamentalist hayseeds—and kept the sentence.

By contrast, nobody even objected to John McCain's hymn to America at this year's Republican convention in Philadelphia. No doubt this difference reflects the party's current intolerance for controversy at conventions, an intolerance rooted in a perception that Houston had a surplus of it. In addition, McCain's speech to the convention was eloquent, gracious, and conservative. But McCain's message ought to be controverted anyway, and not just by religious conservatives. He misunderstands the country he has served so well, and his misunderstanding is dangerous in its implications.

McCain's speech to the convention came at a delicate political moment for him. His presidential campaign went as far as it did because its large themes—patriotism, self-government, honor—were powerful and conservative ones, and ones he was well equipped to address. But the campaign failed because those themes came attached to liberal policies. Republican voters overwhelmingly rejected him.

McCain wants to keep open the option of running for president in 2004 if Bush loses in November. His task at the convention, then, was to increase his appeal to Republicans without alienating his current supporters, and especially his friends in the media. The first thing he had to do was to dispel doubts about the fervency of his support for George W. Bush. So he said, "I support him. I am grateful to him. And I am proud of him."

Beyond that, McCain's strategy was neither to promote nor to repudiate the policies on which he differs from most Republicans, such as campaign-finance regulation. Instead, he omitted all mention of those policies. McCain could have replaced them with other policies that fit his campaign themes but are more congenial to conservatives. He didn't do that either. Instead, those themes stood alone. When McCain declared that we have to "restore the people's sovereignty over government," he could have been speaking about abolishing soft money—or taking on the imperial judiciary. The effect was that the delegates were able to applaud the statement, while McCain's journalistic cheering section was not offended.

McCain's silence about policy had another effect: It forced him to flesh out his underlying philosophy. That philosophy begins with the familiar argument for America as an ideological nation, which is to say, a nation constituted by the liberal-democratic principles for which it stands. The typical formulation is that America is more than a nation, it's an idea. Other nations might be held together by race or culture, but Ameri-

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cans are united by their shared devotion to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Liberals and neoconservatives have long agreed on this point. But McCain, in applying the point to contemporary circumstances, pushed it further than most of them would go.

■

McCain comes close to arguing for patriotism not merely as an ideology but as a civil religion.

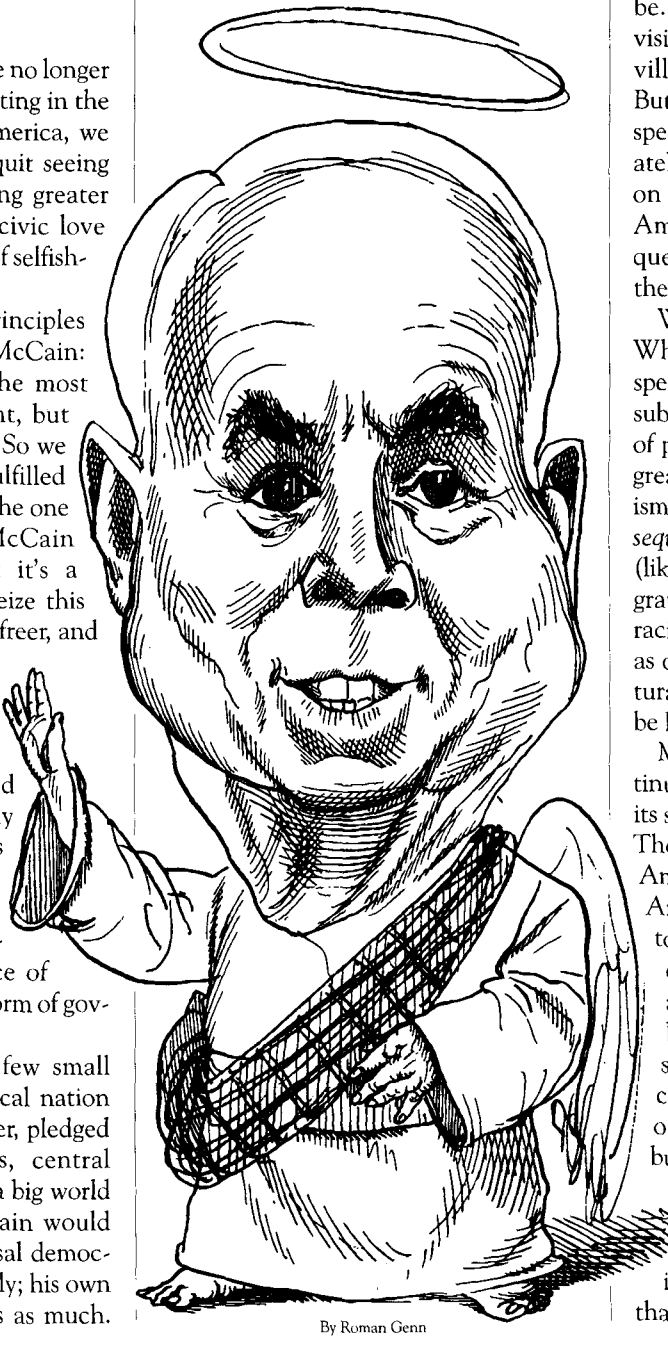
■

He explains that because we no longer think of ourselves as participating in the ideological project that is America, we are balkanizing: "When we quit seeing ourselves as part of something greater than our self-interest, then civic love gives way to the temptations of selfishness, bigotry, and hate."

Our project is to fulfill principles that are universal, says McCain: "[D]emocracy is not only the most effective form of government, but the only moral government." So we have to see our principles fulfilled universally. This brings us to the one policy pronouncement McCain makes in the speech—but it's a doozie: "We are obliged to seize this moment to help build a safer, freer, and more prosperous world, completely free of the tyranny that made the last century such a violent age." The words in McCain's prepared speeches are always carefully chosen. We are *obliged*—it is obligatory for us—to make the world "completely free" of tyranny, with tyranny implicitly understood as the absence of democracy (the "only moral form of government").

We have moved, with a few small steps, from being an ideological nation to being a revolutionary power, pledged to transform the Caucasus, central Africa, Saudi Arabia . . . It's a big world out there. Presumably McCain would allow that the goal of universal democracy must be pursued prudently; his own foreign-policy record suggests as much. But in this case, the goal itself is imprudent. Worldwide liberal democracy can be a guiding ideal. Anything more than that would strike most conservatives, indeed most Americans, as dangerously utopian.

The domestic implications of McCain's national-greatness conservatism are hazier. But here too, a tendency toward grandiosity can be discerned. McCain comes close to arguing for patriotism not merely as an ideology but as a civil religion. Consider how he praises Gov. Bush: "He wants nothing to divide us into separate nations. Not our color. Not our race. Not our wealth. Not our religion. Not our politics. He wants us to live for America, as one nation, and together profess the American Creed of self-evident truths." *To live for America.* It's not clear what that means, but it sounds uncomfortably close to idolatry.



By Roman Genn

There are other passages in the speech that have this sound. It is a religious speech, in fact, though it does not mention God. It doesn't even conclude with the conventional prayer for His blessing. Instead, McCain ends with, "I have such faith in you, my fellow Americans. And I am haunted by the vision of what will be." This bit about being haunted by visions alludes to a passage in Tocqueville that McCain had quoted earlier. But it's still an odd way to end a political speech, especially since it was immediately preceded by an elegant meditation on the speaker's own mortality and America's endurance (its greatness "a quest without end, the object beyond the horizon").

What's really haunting McCain? What is all this doing in a political speech anyway? Perhaps it's serving as a substitute for a more traditional politics of patriotism. McCain presents national greatness as an antidote to multiculturalism, but it may be better to see it as a *consequence* of multiculturalism. McCain (like Bush) is unwilling to reduce immigration levels, or at least to abolish the racial spoils system or to insist on English as our common language. With our cultural cohesion thus weakened, we must be held together by ideology.

McCain suggests that America's continued existence as a nation depends on its sense of its own greatness and destiny. The truth may be the other way around: America will not sustain its greatness if Americans stop feeling that they belong to a common culture. American principles elevate American patriotism above other countries' patriotisms, but all patriotism begins in the same sentiment of belonging. We love our country for the same reason we love our mother: not because she is great, but because she is ours.

America is a great nation. But it can be great only because it is a nation. And a nation, as McCain inadvertently reminds us, is more than an idea. **NR**

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 III ■

The GOP's Burden

The color of the convention

JAY NORDLINGER

A LONG time ago, Henry Kissinger had an enduring insight: that liberals "preempt the categories." By that he meant that liberals decide what we may and may not discuss; if we rumble, it is on their turf.

Seldom has this been truer than during the Republican convention in Philadelphia. The media, so heavy with liberals (crude as it may be to point out), were pleased to talk about abortion; they were also inclined to talk a little about gay rights; but mainly they wanted to talk about race. And so the coverage of the convention was almost entirely painted in black and white.

The Republicans, of course, did their part—they always do. They desperately, pathetically, wanted to be seen as a party of "inclusion." Their slogan was "Renewing America's Purpose—Together" (as opposed, apparently, to man by man). They peppered the stage with black and Hispanic speakers; they have done so for the last several conventions, but the media treated it as new. The convention's co-chairmen were Rep. J. C. Watts, Rep. Jennifer Dunn, and Rep. Henry Bonilla. In other words, the Republicans offered—for those of you keeping score at home, and recent weeks have been about nothing if not score-keeping—a black, a woman, and a Hispanic. We are deep into the territory of Secretary James Watt, who once announced that liberals ought to be satisfied with a commission he had appointed, composed as it was of "a black, a woman, two Jews, and a cripple."

But it hardly mattered what the Republicans did on stage, because the big media were most interested—almost exclusively interested—in the color of the delegates on the floor. What liberals saw was not a gathering of Americans with certain views and political commitments, but a sea of damning white. And, as usual, the Republicans were inept in defending themselves. They prove in a thousand different ways that they have accepted—have internalized—the Democratic critique of them. They act guilty; they go around cringing. They quake to affirm their principles and ideals, which are admirably liberal (old-liberal) ones. Now, more than ever, race is the GOP's burden.

Republicans respond, wearily, that they're damned if they do, damned if they don't. Stage a convention without regard to race, and you are attacked as a racist. Stage one that is color-conscious, and you are attacked as a fraud. The liberals' criticism is rich: They spend day and night demonizing the Republicans as a party antagonistic to blacks; then, having succeeded, they look on their handiwork—a party from which blacks shrink—and profess shock.

■

When liberals looked at the floor, they saw a sea of damning white.

■

In Philadelphia, race fever began on Opening Night, when Colin Powell stepped up to the microphone. To the delight of the GOP's harshest critics, the general decided to spank the Republicans on race. He chastised those who "miss no opportunity to roundly and loudly condemn affirmative action that helped a few thousand black kids get an education," but who emit "hardly a whimper" about "affirmative action for lobbyists who load our federal tax code with preferences for special interests."

Rarely do politicians get cheaper than Powell was here. His was an equation that defies logic, that affronts common sense. Leaving that aside, however, whom does he think he was scolding? The Republicans are the party of the flat tax (to the extent that there is any movement at all toward such a system). They are the party of reforming the IRS, of equality of opportunity, of equality under the law. You might have thought that the die-hard Republicans assembled in the hall would take offense; instead, they just smiled and applauded, determined to hold their peace.

In the course of his speech, Powell uttered . . . well, "hardly a whimper" of criticism of the Democratic party. He preferred to lecture his fellow Republicans. He insisted—as all the Bushies do—that they "reach out to minority communities, and particularly the African-American community." What's more, "it must be a sustained effort. It must be every day. It must be for real."

This sounded like, more than anything else, a call for Democratic-style posturing and pandering. It insulted, or should have insulted, sincere Republicans of long standing, including President Bush, who was sitting right in front of Powell. A few Republicans were reminded of Nancy Reagan's reaction to Vice President Bush's 1988 call for "a kinder, gentler nation." Turning to Maureen Reagan, who was sitting next to her, she said, "Kinder and gentler than who?"

What, we may ask, does Powell think the Republican party has been doing since at least the rise of his old boss, Ronald Reagan? The general might have applauded the Republicans for being the party of all Americans—eschewing tribalism, Balkanization, the poisonous identity politics. When you face down the Soviet Union, liberalize the economy, push for school reform, break welfare dependency, try to return constitutional order to the judiciary, make war against crime—for whom do you do it? For Americans, presumably; all of them; "every day"; "for real." Powell, like so many others in his party, did not sound like a Republican entirely secure in his own (philosophical and spiritual) skin.

Next, the general declared that Republicans "must listen to and speak with all leaders of the black community, regardless of political affiliation or philosophy." Consider the ramifications of this demand. Powell must mean that Republicans should—no, "must"—sit down with Al Sharpton and Louis Farrakhan. How about Khalid Muhammad? He is certainly a leader; he has followers. And Powell did say "regardless." So . . .

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On Night Two, Condoleezza Rice took the stage. It fell to this foreign-policy adviser, a Russianist, to touch the golden core of her party's thinking. Explaining why she became a Republican, she said, "I found a party that sees me as an individual, not as part of a group. I found a party . . ."—but the remainder of her statement could scarcely be heard. The applause for that first sentence was too great, too insistent, too ecstatic. Her words were possibly the most thrilling of the whole convention.

Surveying the Republican show, the press was almost fascinating in its monomania. All over the elite media, they were lined up like Rockettes. Liberals were obsessed with numbers—counting up blacks, counting up Hispanics, counting up women. Never have so many been so demographic. CNN announced that the convention was merely 4.1—point-one, mind you!—percent black. Others offered their own statistics, snorting at "country-club golfers on the convention floor," "well-fed white guys," "a bunch of rich old white guys," and so on.

Bob Herbert, columnist for the *New York Times*, did not disappoint. He is one of the country's chief purveyors of the GOP-as-Klan worldview. Wrote Herbert, "It was disheartening to see Colin Powell up there doing his bit to help mask the reality of the G.O.P., a party that since the 1960s has been

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A self-confident party would say, 'Here it is: not a white or a black agenda, but an American one. How about it?'

■

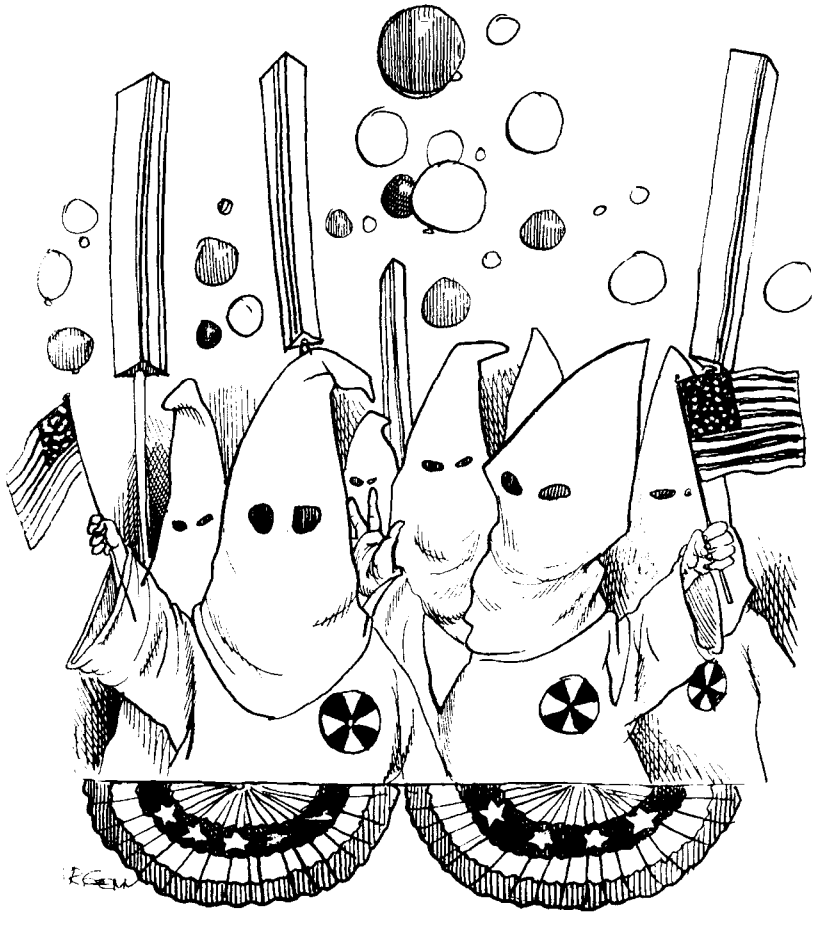
relentlessly hostile to the interests of black Americans." The Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson, also writing in the *Times*, said that "the GOP platform calls for cultural and ethnic policies favored by the party's fringes, belying Mr. Bush's eloquent pleas for racial equality." Another *Times* columnist, Maureen Dowd, even noted that, "in 1962, W.'s uncle Jonathan made the front page of Variety when he considered reviving a black-face minstrel show Off Broadway."

But the cake was taken by Bruce Morton of CNN. He told his viewers that "inclusion is not universal here," because "the GOP platform says, 'We will attain equal opportunity without quotas or other forms of preferential treatment.'" You may need to read that bit twice in order to grasp its import.

Everywhere, it was remarked that the Republican nominees were "two white oil men." This became the trope *du jour*, or *de la saison*. Curiously, Al Gore and other Democrats are never called "white" or "white men." They get to be white men without being labeled as such. In the three months until Election Day, will Gore and Joe Lieberman ever, once, be described as "a pair of white men"? George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, though, seem forever tagged: "two white men"; "two white oil men."

It would be refreshing—world-shaking—if some Republican, somewhere, answered, "So what? So what if our candidates are white, if most of our convention delegates are white? What matters is what we think, what we wish to do, the kind of people we are, and not materially." A more self-confident party would plunk down its agenda—missile defense, school choice, tax cuts, Social Security reform, opposition to abortion—and say, "Here it is: not a white or a black agenda, but an American one. How about it?" In addition, a party that quit the racialist game might find itself rewarded; it might, for example, progress beyond a lousy 10 or 12 percent of black votes.

Conservatives like to recall an incident that took place in late 1992, during the presidential transition. A Clinton factotum stopped by the National Endowment for the Humanities with a clipboard, checking off names. What the factotum was doing was taking a hard look at the agency's women with Hispanic names, to ensure that they themselves were Hispanic, and not (say) merely married to Hispanic men. This stands as the epitome of Democratic racialism. And the Republican party, if it were true to itself, would tell the Democrats exactly what they can do with that clipboard. **NR**



A liberal's view of the Republican convention, by Roman Genn

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 IV ■

Inside the GOP Mind

How to win, and lose, elections

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

PUT yourself for a moment in the shoes of a conservative Republican delegate to the Philadelphia convention—don't get too agitated, it's just for a moment. You have just emerged from the convention hall, tired after shaking around to a sort of recycled bossa nova and looking for the address of a good chiropractor, when you run into some friends from the Iowa and downstate Illinois delegations. There are no television cameras or journalists around, so they are no longer smiling maniacally; underneath their elephant hats, their faces have resumed normal expressions of wariness and suspicion.

"What's up, boys?"

They scowl. One of them kicks moodily at a Log Cabin Republicans paper streamer advertising a "Carmen Miranda Latino Outreach Night."

"Whaddya mean, what's up?" replies another. "Is this a Republican convention or the annual dinner of the Bilingual Friends of Feminism? Frankly, I've had it up to my keister with tostadas and I'm beginning to wonder if the Bush people aren't going overboard with all this inclusiveness. Since when does being inclusive mean excluding Republicans? Or conservatives? Or white males? Or all three combined?"

"Sure, I know he'll cut my taxes—somewhat," chips in a third. "And intervene abroad only when absolutely necessary. And maybe appoint judges who draw the line at infanticide. That's fine as far as it goes. But why do we have to accept race preferences? And make America a bilingual society? And stop illegal immigration by making it legal? And drop our objections to balkanizing multiculturalism? If a Republican administration ratifies the radical reshaping of America as a nation based on group rights and ethnic identities, then we'll entrench that new order for two or three generations—the way Willkie, Dewey, and Ike entrenched FDR's New Deal. Well, I say it's spinach and I say to hell with it."

"Cheer up, boys," you say, waving a copy of the *New York Times*. "I've just been reading the biased liberal press and we've nothing to worry about. According to the media, this multicultural fiesta is just a charade. Underneath the salsa, everything is just as before. There's even a criticism of racial preferences hidden away in the party platform. And once the election is safely won, we can go back to eating hot dogs, speaking English, treating people on their merits, and advocating assimilation. Yippee!"

Would you believe yourself, gentle reader? For there are a number of questionable calculations underlying the apparent Republican strategy as illustrated by the Philly convention, and as outlined to the *Washington Post*'s Tom Edsall by Karl Rove, the Bush campaign's top strategist.

■

GOP leaders are haunted by a guilty fear that they are exploiting racial bigotry, but comfort themselves that they will do nothing about it.

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Rove suggested that the time had come to reject "the use of such issues as affirmative action, gay rights, and 'welfare queens' that past GOP candidates had employed in a calculated bid to polarize the electorate and put together a predominantly white majority." In this, he was supported by Ralph Reed, who criticized a strategy of ceding the black and Hispanic votes to the Democrats while seeking to drive the GOP's percentage of the white vote to over 70 percent. Reed added piously that George W. Bush would never "countenance . . . attempting to use affirmative action or issues like that that raise painful and polarizing emotions about race in order to win an election. He would rather lose the election." It is not clear from the text, however, whether this last statement had been cleared by the candidate.

Note that both Rove and Reed treat racial preferences purely as tactical wedge issues. Neither considers whether ethnically based legal privileges ought to be an issue of overriding principle—even though the American Revolution was explicitly justified on the grounds that all citizens should enjoy legal and political equality. That might explain why GOP leaders, on the rare occasions when they oppose preferences (or official bilingualism or illegal immigration), do so half-heartedly and without effect. They are haunted by a guilty fear that they are exploiting racial bigotry, but comfort themselves that at least they will do nothing about it after the election.

That said, let us examine the intellectual steps that lead to Karl Rove's conclusion and electoral strategy:

1. *We fought on polarizing "wedge issues" in the last two elections—and lost.*

In fact, neither of the last two GOP presidential campaigns was fought on such issues. The 1992 convention attempted to make "family values" a GOP advantage by holding a notably saccharine family evening built around the Bushes. But when the media suggested that to praise families was implicitly to stigmatize gays and single moms, the 1992 Bush campaign backed smartly away from the issue—and ran a tepid campaign on nothing in particular. Similarly, the Dole campaign long resisted conservative pressure to support the anti-preference Proposition 209 in California until the very last moment when—against the pleas of 209's organizers and to avoid near-certain defeat in California—it backed it because it was a useful "wedge issue." The "divisive" 209 subsequently won with about 1.3 million more California votes than Dole achieved.

The reasons for both Republican defeats had nothing to do with wedge issues. Bush lost in 1992 because of the recession, because he had broken his "no new taxes" pledge, because he had signed legislation extending affirmative-action preferences (i.e., was caught on the wrong side of the wedge issue), and because he waged a lackluster campaign. Dole lost because he was a gloomy Gus

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fighting a brilliant politician who had peace and prosperity on his side. The last election in which Republicans ran on culturally symbolic wedge issues—e.g., the Pledge of Allegiance, Willie Horton—was 1988. And they won that one.

2. *We cannot afford to cede black and Hispanic votes to the Democrats without a fight.*

True enough. But there are two ways of ceding these constituencies. The first is to assume that they are naturally Democratic constituencies that will always vote Democratic. Some previous GOP campaigns have made that false assumption. The second way—the Bush way—is to assume that they are naturally liberal constituencies and appeal to them on liberal grounds. It is significant that the most prominent black speaker at Philly was Colin Powell, who denounced the GOP as hypocritical racists over preferences, while there was no room for Ward Connerly, who has fought a brave and principled conservative campaign against preferences. The message sent to those communities by the convention's multiculturalism was less one of participation in the common American experience than of ethnic particularism.

Yet the natural Republican base in the black and Latino communities is composed of conservative voters who reject preferences, dislike bilingual education, and embrace an American identity. Such voters are very numerous—a recent Zogby poll had 52 percent of black voters opposing preferences, and in 1996 Proposition 209 won—to put it another way—three times as many black votes as the Dole campaign. The GOP's problem is that it fails to energize this base.

Its obvious strategy, therefore, is to rouse as many of these voters as possible out to the polls, by making a principled non-racial appeal. Instead, it makes a multicultural appeal that has no fewer than four disadvantages: It appeals mainly to liberals and ethnic nationalists in minority groups who will never vote Republican; it sends a message to besieged conservatives in those groups that the GOP disdains their ideological sympathy; it alienates some minorities by appealing to others—black voters, for instance, bitterly dislike the bilingual messages aimed at Latinos; and it depresses the white-voter turnout that still provides the GOP with most of its support.

3. *But we do not want to win again by driving up the GOP's percentage of the white vote to over 70 percent.*

One is humbled by such nobility, of course, but perhaps it should be qualified by the following considerations. In the first place, the last two Republican presidential candidates received not 70 percent but 40 and 46 percent of the white vote respectively. So the GOP has not been winning by these shabby methods; it has been losing. Second, George W. Bush is ahead at present precisely because he is nearing 70 percent (of white men at least); without that, he would be trailing Al Gore significantly. And whites account for (roughly) 80 percent of the electorate, compared to some 8 and 12 percent for Latinos and blacks respectively. Hence, a small percentage gain among white voters is numerically equal to a virtual doubling of the GOP vote in either minority.

That calculation will gradually change in the U.S., as it has already changed in California, owing to Bush's policy of high levels of immigration—which, over time, transform the ethnic makeup of the electorate. For the moment, however, the Republicans have far better prospects of constructing a majority with white voters who strayed to Perot than with minority voters who have never voted GOP. That does not mean white voters are better people, of course; but it suggests their votes should not be disdained. After all, if you prick us, do we not bleed?

It could be that none of these cultural and ethnic issues will matter at all come November, and that tax cuts and a strong foreign policy will sweep all before them. Conservatives should not rest on that account. For if the GOP wins on an appeal that includes multiculturalism, it will govern in that spirit. We would then have committed ourselves, without quite realizing the implications, to an economic strategy of low taxes and controlled expenditure, and a political strategy of sharpening and rewarding ethnic identification. But how long would taxes remain low or government modest when the demands for an ethnic redistribution of the economy's spoils came rumbling in? **NR**

■ CAMPAIGN 2000 V ■

The Catholic Factor

Which way will they swing?

KATE O'BEIRNE

LOOKING heavenward from the floor of Philadelphia's First Union Center, delegates spotted a large white banner that appeared on the last evening of the convention. Bright red letters declared "Catholics ❤ Bush" on the unauthorized, hand-painted sheet, hanging from a plush skybox the GOP provided for its Catholic Task Force. As Christians, Catholics are obliged to love Al Gore too, but this newly formed task force at the RNC hopes to convince them not to vote for him in November.

Party strategists believe that Catholic swing voters will provide Bush with his margin of victory. According to Steven Wagner, the task force's executive director, George W. Bush has strengthened his appeal to Catholic voters in the last few weeks, even though he didn't pick a Catholic as his running mate. "With the selection of Dick Cheney, the ticket has responded to the call of the bishops to stand unambiguously for the life of the unborn," Wagner explains. Deal Hudson, editor of *Crisis* magazine and an informal adviser to the Bush campaign, agrees that any doubts about Bush's commitment to the pro-life cause should be eliminated with his selection of a pro-life running mate, and his acceptance-speech pledge to sign a ban on partial-birth abortion.

The task force wanted this year's convention to have a visible Catholic presence, and a steady stream of the city's priests was hosted in its crowded skybox each night. Some of them periodically visited delegates on the convention floor. Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia delivered the closing prayer of the convention.

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In his new position at the RNC, Wagner will be putting to the test the conclusions he has reached based on the landmark voter surveys he conducted for *Crisis* over the past two years. In his analysis of Catholic voting trends, Wagner found a unique political identity among active Catholics (whom he defines as attending Mass at least four times a month) and argues that this group constitutes an important swing constituency. While inactive Catholics have voted more Democratic in presidential elections since 1960 than the country as a whole, it is active Catholics who are the swing voters. They voted for Nixon in 1972, for Carter in 1976, and for Reagan in 1980 and 1984. (As if to demonstrate their volatility, they voted against George Bush in 1988, but supported him in 1992.) Active Catholics generally represent almost half of all Catholic voters. Catholics constituted 29 percent of the presidential vote in 1996, divided evenly among active (15 percent) and inactive (14 percent).

Catholic voters could have been responsible for a miracle in 1996. Had just 15 percent of them shifted to Bob Dole, giving him 53 percent of their vote, he would have won the presidency. According to Wagner's math, if W. corrals 55 percent of the Catholic vote, it will be impossible for Gore to win.

The attitudes of the Catholic swing voters appear to be sympathetic to Bush. Only a minority of Catholics support what Wagner calls the "social justice" agenda that values tolerance over courage, and favors an activist national government, race and gender hiring preferences, and multiculturalism. Since 1960, the majority of all Catholics, and 71 percent of active Catholics, have shifted to a "social renewal" orientation. These Catholics are responding to a perceived moral crisis, which they believe has been exacerbated by the federal government and public education. They support an absolute standard of morality and criticize popular culture for undermining the character and values of young people. The Democrats' Hollywood convention probably won't appeal to this sensibility.

Bush's call for individual responsibility, renewed community life, and civility is a direct appeal to voters concerned with what Princeton's Robert George calls our "moral ecology." Two-thirds of active Catholics consider abortion to be always immoral, as do 55 percent of all Catholics. Bush's unambiguous support for the pro-life platform plank, and his choice of a pro-life running mate, reinforce his standing with these Catholic voters.

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Wagner identifies four groups of Catholic voters, two of which are already more Republican than not.

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The Catholic swing voters Republicans will be courting this fall are concentrated in many of the key battleground states. The RNC task force hopes to create a mailing list of a million and a half of these voters in nine states, including New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, and Missouri. The RNC's unprecedented effort, with the enthusiastic support of the Bush campaign, represents the practical application of Steve Wagner's analysis.

Wagner identifies four groups of Catholic voters, two of which, representing 42 percent of all Catholics, are already more Republican than not: inactive Catholics with libertarian economic leanings, and active Catholics very concerned with the moral climate. Al Gore, on the other hand, will be counting on a third group: the 32 percent of Catholics who are both inactive qua Catholics, and sympathetic with the liberal social-justice agenda.

The fourth group (26 percent) of Catholics are active, and more concerned with the moral climate than with social justice, but they are still more Democratic than Republican. This group is crucial for Bush. Steven Wagner hopes the Bush campaign will get the message of the parties' competing platforms to these voters, and add the requisite poetry by laying out an agenda of social renewal. Then, come November, the sentiment of that sign in Philadelphia will be transformed into votes. **NR**

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 VI ■

Tax Cuts: A Comeback

Lower is still better

LAWRENCE KUDLOW &

STEPHEN MOORE

EARLIER this year, pundits were still declaring tax cuts dead as a political issue, smothered by Reagan's success in cutting rates in the 1980s and by prosperity in the 1990s.

But not so fast: Tax cuts may be the sleeper issue of this campaign. President Clinton just vetoed marriage-penalty tax relief, calling it a "fiscally reckless tax strategy"—but the public disagrees. Poll after poll shows a new shift of voter preferences toward tax cuts.

A recent *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll shows that voters now prefer using federal budget surpluses to cut taxes across the board, rather than reduce the national debt. The margin is 42 percent to 32 percent, a significant shift from a few months ago. A Zogby poll finds that 63.7 percent of self-described independent voters believe they are overtaxed, and that nearly half believe a 10 percent to 20 percent personal tax rate would be fair. A Rasmussen survey shows that 69 percent want to end the marriage penalty and kill the estate tax, but by a 2 to 1 margin (62 percent to 29 percent) Americans prefer a tax cut for everyone.

Here's the real surprise: A recent *Business Week*/Harris poll found that minority voters are far more supportive of tax cuts than are white voters. Overall, 78 percent of blacks and 68 percent of Latinos say cutting taxes is "very important" to them.

Mr. Kudlow is an NR contributing editor. Mr. Moore is the president of the Club for Growth and an NR contributing editor.

Why this tax-cut renaissance? The surplus has a lot to do with it. The Congressional Budget Office now predicts non-Social Security surpluses of $2.4 trillion over the next ten years, with Social Security surpluses running to $2.2 trillion. This CBO re-estimate marks the third upward revision in just the past six months, and it is having a big impact on public attitudes toward tax cuts. The argument that we can't afford them loses force with every new surplus number.

A smart GOP congressional strategy is also helping. Instead of last year's misunderstood, seemingly excessive $792 billion tax-cut package—which Clinton vetoed, without provoking any public outrage—Republicans this year divided up the omnibus tax-cut bill into specific parts. The strategy worked: By the time of the convention in Philadelphia, the GOP had already succeeded in passing bills ending the marriage-penalty tax and the estate tax, cutting the 85 percent tax rate on Social Security benefits, expanding super-saver IRA and 401(k) accounts (in a stunning 401-25 House vote), and lifting the taxable-earnings cap on seniors' income (a bill that Clinton signed into law in the spring).

House Rules Committee chairman David Dreier, one of the architects of the Republican House tax-cutting strategy, says: "As these surplus numbers went up astronomically, people concluded that, hey, shouldn't just a little bit of that come back to me? And we learned that people relate to specifics. For these tax cuts, the political importance of the smaller pieces became greater than the original tax-cut package."

House Speaker Dennis Hastert was a tax-cut hero in his advocacy of this new strategy. Though an ardent tax-cutter, Ways and Means chairman Bill Archer was initially unenthusiastic; tax-writing committees traditionally prefer big bills to small bills. But Hastert was able to persuade Archer of the political merits of small-is-beautiful.

And the public was receptive. Despite talk of how the tax bite has diminished over the years, it is now, in fact, pinching some voters even harder. Rising wages and salaries are pushing middle-income people from the 15 percent tax bracket to the 28 percent bracket—and, with increasing frequency, right up through the 31 percent bracket to the 36 percent bracket.

This real-income "bracket creep" is punishing successful work with excessively progressive taxation. Largely as a result of the bracket creep, personal tax payments over the past year have increased by a startling 12.2 percent, which is over four times the inflation rate. Overall, national income is rising at a 6 percent inflation-adjusted pace, but *after-tax personal income* is growing only half as fast (3 percent). Meanwhile, the surging stock market of recent years has flattened out through the first two-thirds of 2000, so the income from market profits has at least temporarily disappeared. And tax payments made this past April 15 for prior-year capital gains, bonuses, and salary hikes deflated pocketbooks and wallets—creating major tax sticker-shock.

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Bush's argument for tax cuts is principled rather than prudential, and fits well with today's prosperity.

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All this would certainly put folks in a tax-cutting mood. The cause also benefits from leftover good feelings about the Reagan tax cuts, which continue to create economic benefits to this day. (Notice how Gore, after the primaries, is no longer attacking "Reaganomics"?). By lowering the top personal tax rate to 33 percent from 40 percent, dropping the basic middle-income bracket to 25 percent, and pulling the 15 percent bracket down to 10 percent, George W. Bush has adopted Reagan's principles. This program—including the plan to allow people to divert 2 percent of their Social Security payroll tax to retirement accounts—could increase the U.S. economy's long-run growth potential from the current 4 percent to around 4.5 percent.

But on the campaign trail, Bush sells his tax-cut plan less on the Reaganesque growth model than on

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the idea that Washington shouldn't gobble up all the surplus money: "The surplus is not the government's money. The surplus is the people's money." Bush is also establishing what he calls a moral principle that the federal government should not take more than one-third of taxpayer incomes. Bush campaign insiders say that the candidate originally wanted the limit to be one-quarter of taxpayer incomes—and that if surplus numbers continue to improve, he might decide to push down the top rate even further.

Bush's argument is indeed principled rather than prudential, and fits well with today's prosperity (the governor repeated the phrase "on principle" again and again in the tax section of his acceptance speech). Bush's moral case for tax cuts is important, but that doesn't mean the practical one has disappeared: Tax cuts will still help expand the information economy. Just as important, they will stop Washington from launching a Great Society-type entitlement binge that could derail the prosperity.

In the end, the biggest reason for the renewed power of tax cuts may be the larger forces afoot in the economy. Trillions of dollars of surpluses are expected to flow in to a Beltway bureaucracy that is distrusted by Main Street and totally unfathomable to the Internet generation. Folks on Main Street and in the suburbs would rather use the money to help their kids. The kids, in turn, once they're old enough to turn in their skateboards for business plans, would rather see their tax dollars devoted to new-technology start-ups. And almost everyone—fully two-thirds of likely voters own stocks either directly or indirectly—wants more after-tax income to invest in super-saver accounts that will help them reap the long-term benefits of the stock market.

Ownership, investment, and entrepreneurship fit the spirit of the times, and Bush has caught that spirit. The pundits who declared tax cuts a dead issue have been proved wrong. Tax cuts are again at the heart of the Republican presidential campaign—right where they belong. **NR**

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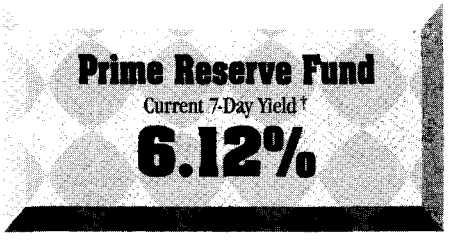

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■ THE MIDDLE EAST ■

Arafat's Moment of Truth

It's now or never

DAVID PRYCE-JONES

THE mood music after the failure of the Camp David talks is in a minor key, suspiciously soft and low. To be sure, Yasser Arafat marked his return home with a we-will-never-surrender-an-inch speech. The crazies, both Israeli and Palestinian, echoed him, with their mutually exclusive claims to Jerusalem. But where has Arafat been since? Doing what he loves and does best, flying around the world on his private jet in order to whisper into the ears of dignitaries and heads of state. Arafat is testing out the likely effects of accepting concessions from Israel that he refused at Camp David.

If you go into the jungle, following some sound advice from Kipling, you must be sure what size beast you are. For decades, Arab and Palestinian leaders made the mistake of believing that they spoke for a large beast, capable of charging right through the jungle in tandem with the Soviet Union, an even larger and fiercer beast. War after war, uprising after uprising, these leaders found themselves that much worse off each time. And still they said no to Israel, no to compromise, no to power-sharing. To them, peacemaking was an admission of weakness, shaming them publicly in the eyes of the world. It is this cultural perception of shame that maintains the unbridgeable divide between Arabs and Israelis. In hard fact, the expiry of the Soviet beast exposed these constant noes as empty wish-fulfillment, and that was a first and most necessary step out of the jungle. The recent Camp David meeting is best seen as another step on the same path.

For Arafat himself, this path out involves a radical and comprehensive reordering of his mindset. From beginning to end, his career has been based on violence. Humanly speaking, Arafat is a hoodlum and racketeer, nothing less than a monster. He is responsible for the deaths of many thousands of innocent people in deliberate atrocities ranging from civil war to the pitiful murder of the invalid Leon Klinghoffer, thrown overboard in his wheelchair from a ship hijacked by the PLO.

Seizing the leadership of that organization in 1968, Arafat found a fragmented people, too few and too poor to mobilize in any strength. Their elite had long since settled in other countries. Terror was the instrument with which to convert weakness into strength and a national cause. Squat and unshaven, in military fatigues, the Arab headdress as

By Ismael Roldan

chic as Che Guevara's beret, Arafat set out to hold everyone at gunpoint as he climbed to become a self-made one-man ruler. In Arab eyes, this was not in the least shocking. Crime brings reward to whoever excels in it. To the winner the spoils and the honor; to the loser nothing but shame. Whispering into the ears of Arab one-man rulers and Soviet leaders, Arafat built a patronage system with which to buy allies, and to acquire arms against enemies. Had Palestine been able to provide Arafat with a power base the equivalent of Syria and Iraq, he would have come to be a tyrant as sinister as Hafiz Assad and Saddam Hussein. Politically speaking, the career startlingly illustrates the whole Arab social order.

Successive Israeli governments underestimated him. They watched with satisfaction while the PLO was driven out of Jordan and then Lebanon, finally to Tunis, far away. Arab countries could apparently be relied on to police the PLO. The costs might be painful, but Arafat's terrorism could be contained. The occupied territories remained astonishingly peaceful. What were these territories, General Dayan once asked, except six little towns? Sharing Israel's condescension, neighboring Jordan and Lebanon relied on Israel to police the PLO.

In December 1987, grievances in the occupied territories in fact erupted, in the so-called intifada, or uprising. At first Arafat was as surprised as the Israelis, but he soon perceived that this violence marked the start of the genuine national movement that would fulfil his ambitions. This insight allowed him gradually to initiate a process of bargaining with Israel, over which he could acquire substantial control, balancing the promise of peace with carefully calibrated resorts to violence. Under pressure from the United States, Arafat grudgingly agreed to renounce violence altogether, knowing that he could always provoke it while disclaiming responsibility. His real attitude was revealed when in the Gulf War of 1991 he proclaimed his support for a Saddam Hussein who was threatening "to burn half of Israel" with his missiles.

Alarmed on the one hand at the prospect of a Palestinian national movement that could not be contained, and reassured on the other by Arafat's nominal acceptance of a peace process, Israeli governments over the last decade evolved a new policy of crafting a separation between Israelis and Palestinians. The main vehicle for this purpose has been the so-called Palestinian Authority. The more the Palestinians abstained from violence, the more self-rule they could have. Appetite grows with eating, as the French proverb has it. Today the Palestine Authority consists of the Gaza Strip and half the West Bank—Prime Minister Ehud Barak at Camp David was prepared to concede up to 90 percent of it, with consequent dismantling

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of some Israeli settlements. Arafat's threat to declare a state on September 13 plays on definitions. Under another name, Palestine is already a state.

As one-man ruler of this embryo state, Arafat's word is law. At least 40,000 armed men in several police and security services do his bidding, and they have been smuggling in heavy weaponry. The jails are full of those who have fallen foul of him. Journalists and critics are bought, muzzled, beaten up or killed, sometimes in prison. European and other aid, as well as some taxes paid to Israel but then refunded, finish in accounts in Arafat's name in a Tel Aviv bank. In the absence of independent auditing, public Palestinian funds merge with Arafat's private fortune. He now enjoys greater funds for patronage than in the old Soviet days. Bribery and corruption are rife, not to say endemic. Granted the small scale, the Palestinian statelet has proved to be a dictatorship as cruel and ugly as any in the Arab social order.

Opinion polls show that over half the Palestinians believe that renewed violence against Israel would produce better results than peace talks. Islamic fundamentalists take the lead in calling for a jihad against Israel, and rejecting any arrangements over Jerusalem that involve shared sovereignty in areas they consider exclusively theirs. They may be able to recruit suicide bombers for individual terror missions, but the option of war or even a renewed intifada is not available. A range of security measures, roads, and fences now separates Israelis and Palestinians almost completely, with the exception of a few flashpoints on the West Bank. Islamic fundamentalists are more of an opposition to Arafat than they are to Israel, and many of them are already in his prisons. Whatever they may say in polls or street demonstrations, Palestinians by now certainly realize that they are too small a beast to engage in a fight to the death with Israel.

Arafat is now 71. Visibly he has trouble speaking. A trembling of the lips inhibits clear articulation. Some say he has a neurological twitch of no great import, others that he has Parkinson's disease. He has no very obvious successors. Each missed opportunity to make peace means that the Palestinians must try to obtain desperately rather less than they could have obtained easily earlier. Generation after generation, they know only the bitter regrets of lost opportunities.

What ought Israel to do? One possible course of action would be to recognize a Palestine state before September 13, on condition that Palestine recognizes Israel at the same time. This would be cost-free, and also a challenge to Arafat to meet the norms of international law governing states. But the proceedings at Camp David failed because it proved impossible to persuade Arafat to make the requisite compromise for the sake of peace. He has to be helped out of the one-man-ruler scheme of things in which the winner takes all, and across the cultural divide into a different scale of values in which compromise is a question of realism and common humanity, nothing to do with the apportioning of honor or shame. Another and blunter way of putting it is that Palestinians will meet Israelis on equal terms only when they too have a democracy.

Given the record, it seems improbable that Arafat the master terrorist can reinvent himself as Arafat the politician, Arafat the statesman. To transcend one's own culture requires an imagination given to few. But it is inconceivable that the Arab order is to be subject forever to tyranny and absolutism. Perhaps their moment for democracy is here and now. This is Arafat's last chance to go down in history as the great man who brought his state into being, and at peace with Israel too. The mood music suggests that he knows it. **NR**

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■ CULTURE WATCH ■

Hello, Sacajawea . . .

. . . and goodbye, George Washington?

RICHARD BROOKHISER

GEORGE WASHINGTON has been getting out and about lately, appearing in print and TV ads in a variety of guises (my favorite: aerobics instructor), to plug the new dollar coin that bears an image of Sacajawea, the guide for Lewis and Clark. Ever the gentleman, especially where the fair sex is concerned, the Father of His Country has been giving the young lady a hand. Is this a harmless expansion of the American pantheon, adding a new face to Washington, Lincoln, Uncle Sam, and the Thanksgiving turkey? Or is it the prelude to a sly iconectomy, replacing a dead white male with a dead red female?

The last (and only other) time the Mint put the face of a historical female figure on a regular-issue coin, it was a disaster. Everything about the Susan B. Anthony dollar, first struck in 1979, was wrong. The coin was the same color and nearly the same size as the quarter, confusing the sight-challenged. The design on the back, an eagle landing on the Moon, had nothing to do with the design on the front. Ms. Anthony herself, big-nosed and jut-jawed, looked, except for her prim and homely hairdo, like a cigar-store Indian. The coins accumulated, unused, in banks, and the Mint lost heart. They struck 750 million of them in the first year; by 1981, they were striking fewer than ten million. Then they gave up.

This time the Mint was determined to do a better job. The Sacajawea dollar is the color of a bright brass doorknob. Since we don't know what Sacajawea looked like, the Mint felt free to invent a pleasing image of her. Most important, they gave the coin a clever publicity blitz—whence the Washington ads.

America has been putting Indians on its coins for over two hundred years. The first was a rather stiff standing brave on the pre-Constitution copper coins of the State of Massachusetts. In 1854, an allegorical lady wearing an Indian headdress appeared on the gold dollar. For the next 84 years, Indians jostled in our pockets on one coin or another. Some of them were ethnographically accurate: The Indian head on the Buffalo nickel (1913–1938) is a composite portrait of three actual Indian models, named Iron Tail, Two Moons, and John Big Tree. The bison on the reverse is a portrait too, of Black Diamond, who lived for many years in the Bronx Zoo, and after his death was served as steaks at Delmonico's. Other monetary Indians were idealized images of liberty, wearing Indian gear. The young woman on the Indian Head cent (1859–1909) was based on a statue of Venus in a Philadelphia museum.

UPI

Will she give George a run for his money?

Putting Indians on our coins has always been a romantic gesture—a consolation prize for losing the continent. The Massachusetts Indian appeared a century after the tribes of New England were crushed. Liberty could safely don bonnets in the 1850s because Tecumseh, the last Indian who had been a real threat to the country, had been killed decades earlier. The Buffalo nickel memorialized braves and bison 23 years after the official closing of the frontier. Actual Indians might not like being figures of nostalgia, but that is the persona they wear in the inner theater of the American mind.

The Sacajawea dollar continues this tradition. It could, indeed, be called the Stephen Ambrose dollar: It was his best-selling book, *Undaunted Courage*—a perfect combination of eco-tourism and summer-vacation patriotism—that sparked the renewed interest in Lewis and Clark. Add traditional Indian chic, disguised as latter-day political correctness, and the Mint has a clear winner.

Sacajawea makes a fine coin. The real question is, What will happen to the dollar bill? Washington's pocket billboard has powerful enemies, and—appropriately enough for a story involving currency—their motives are economic. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing has long hated making dollar bills. They circulate so rapidly, and wear out so fast, that they must be constantly reprinted, at considerable expense. The copper industry, meanwhile, has been scheming to replace the dollar bill with a dollar coin ever since the cent piece became almost entirely zinc, with a copper wash, in 1982. Together, they are willing to shred the First President in order to balance their books.

How important is it that Washington be on the nation's unit of exchange? When Washington died, Henry Lee famously called him "first in the hearts of his countrymen." That is no longer as vividly true as it was when Lee said it. But after five years of writing, talking, and filming a PBS documentary about George Washington, I have found that it is not completely untrue either. People may not know, in great detail, why they like Washington, but they do. When we were shooting in Newburgh, N.Y., the struggling Hudson River city where Washington's army had its last encampment of the Revolution, we looked for what is called vox pop—man-in-the-street interviews. A young black man

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outside a barbershop told me, "Of course we got to think highly of him because [without him] we wouldn't be here right now as free Americans. In my book, he was a good man by nature." John F. Kennedy Jr. didn't call his magazine *Tom* or *Abe*. At the depth of the recent unpleasantness, *The New Yorker* ran a cherry-tree cartoon. Young George to father: "It depends what you mean by 'chop.'" But even such a tough, seemingly unkillable feeling has to be sustained. The image on the bill that everyone sees every day, and that magazines and political cartoons use as shorthand for economic news, is a continuous, unconscious bit of reinforcement.

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The success of the plot against George Washington is not entirely up to the plotters.

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Not that the image on the dollar bill is an ideal one. It is based on the famous Gilbert Stuart portrait, which was also flooded into American schools at the bicentennial, in 1932, of Washington's birth. The trouble with Stuart is that he caught Washington in his sixties, in the stress of his second term (the Whiskey Rebellion had just been suppressed, and the howl over Jay's Treaty had begun); his current set of dentures were especially painful to him. Washington was old and tired, and looks it. Stuart, a testy sort, was not enamored of his subject. The Washington portrait became a bread-winner for the artist, which he often copied for money (he got so proficient that he could turn out two of them in two hours). Washington's age and Stuart's attitude combine to make a rather bleak and forbidding image. John Trumbull's depiction of him after the Battle of Trenton, or Charles Willson Peale's portrait at age 40, show him in full vigor, and with more sympathy. Perhaps if the Bureau of Engraving and Printing swells Washington's head to gargantuan size, as it is doing with the heads of all the other dead guys on the money, they will pick a nicer-looking head to expand.

Yet the Stuart image has itself become an icon of an icon. Grant Wood, no stranger to icons, wittily played off its status in his 1939 painting *Parson Weems' Fable*. In it, Mason Locke Weems, who first wrote the cherry-tree story, is pointing, like a tour guide, to the famous scene. Atop the body of young George, anxiously holding the incriminating hatchet, Wood has clapped the gray head from Stuart's portrait.

The success of the plot against George Washington is not entirely up to the plotters, for their scheme depends on people using the Sacajawea coin. Despite its attractive features, I have seen ominous signs, at least in New York, that it is not catching on. I only get it as change in the subways, where ticket sellers can be instructed to pass it out. The reason is not far to seek. If you find yourself, as you often do, with six or seven loose dollars, six or seven dollar coins weigh down the pocket, and clog the purse. Bills are simply more convenient. Traditionalists wish our latest monetary Indian well. But they also want to keep George Washington first in the wallets of his countrymen. **NR**

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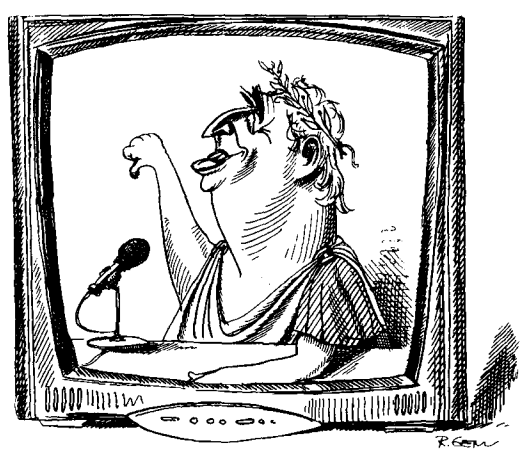
No More Wise Men

And a fine thing, too

MICHAEL KNOX BERAN

In the mid 1950s, the critic Edmund Wilson, dining in Germany with his aristocratic in-laws, the Mumms (of champagne renown), decided to treat them to his "theory of American presidents—the able idealist politicians carrying on the tradition of the Republic (Lincoln, Wilson, the Roosevelts), the machine party politician (Harding and Truman), and the completely non-political expert put in by the big-business interests on the strength of a popular reputation achieved in some non-political field (Grant, Eisenhower, Hoover)."

As for the critic's second presidential type, the machine party politician: no argument there. His third type—the non-political pawn of "big-business interests"—should be interred in the same pantheon where Roswell spacemen and renegade CIA gunmen from Dealey Plaza have been laid to rest. But the first type—the idealist who carries on the tradition of the Republic—is worth pondering. Wilson had in mind those statesmen, president and non-president alike, who lived up to the "high standard of civic conscience" set by the Founders of the country. Such men amounted, for Wilson, to "a public-spirited caste," consecrated to the national service. A talented newcomer like Lincoln, who had made himself into a great man, would always be welcome in this elite fraternity; but nature, Wilson knew, is not so prodigal of great men that an ambitious nation can afford to rely solely on her spontaneous bounty. To create a priestly caste capable of carrying on the nation's public business, institutions are needed, particularly colleges and universities adept at turning callow young bucks from Tidewater plantations or the Hudson River squirearchy into exemplars of civic virtue. Schools like Harvard (which produced the two Roosevelts) and Princeton (which gave the country two Wilsons—Woodrow and Edmund himself) endowed their charges with what Edmund Wilson called "the old classical education," a "culture much wider" than that of a single profession. The result, Wilson said, was a group of national leaders thoroughly absorbed in the "tradition of political idealism and public conscience which had presided at the founding of the Republic."



By Roman Genn

It's an attractive enough ideal, this picture of Brahmin priests officiating in the temple of republican virtue. You can almost see Wilson's silver-haired senators stepping out of a Benjamin West painting, civic magi capable of defusing a diplomatic crisis by quoting a couple of lines of Horace. This ideal—of high-minded patriots with a touch of class—continues to enchant. David Brooks, in his book *Bobos in Paradise*, an analysis of America's new upper class, criticizes members of the contemporary elite (whom Brooks calls bourgeois bohemians, or Bobos) for failing to live up to the old standards, refusing to "assume a leadership role," being slow to devote "their energies to national life." So sunk in bourgeois dullness are Brooks's Bobos that they fail to comprehend the nobility of the old patriotism, can listen to Henry V's speech on St. Crispin's Day with indifference, and remain unmoved by the epitaph of the fallen Spartans at Thermopylae. So soaked are the Bobos in the self-indulgent, pot-laden fumes of bohemia that they are unable to heed the trumpet-notes of public duty. Their failure to enter the "public arena," Brooks argues, has "left a gaping hole in public life." "Filling this hole," he says, "means doing what the postwar ruling class did. It means developing a public service ethos, concluding, as people like Dean Acheson, George C. Marshall, and Dwight Eisenhower did, that of those who are blessed much is expected, and that public service is the highest secular service a person can perform."

We have heard this before. No one ever thinks of himself as living in an age of high civic virtue; the golden time is always in the past. Edmund Wilson, dissatisfied with Ike and the 1950s, yearned for the Republic that existed before the Civil War and the explosion of Gilded Age industry. To David Brooks, writing today, the era of Eisenhower and Acheson

Mr. Beran's essay on political oratory appeared in our July 3 issue. He is the author of *The Last Patrician: Bobby Kennedy and the End of American Aristocracy*.

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was an age of civic giants. For all their nostalgia, however, both Wilson and Brooks have a point. Wilson is right: The code of public honor by which men like Washington and Hamilton lived (their honor really *was* dearer to them than life itself) had, by the 20th century, become a relic. And Brooks, too, is right: However flimsy the Founders' faith had become by the middle of the 20th century, men like Henry Stimson and McGeorge Bundy performed their roles as high priests of the cult of public service with a self-conscious zeal that has no counterpart in today's America. The old school of civic chivalry—the cornerstone of what people used to call the Establishment—is a thing of the past. It is quite dead now; the corpse has begun to rot.

Historians in the future may very well be unable to grasp the fact of its death as fully as we do today, because—in one of those anomalies of which history is full—the presidential candidates of both major parties this year are blood offspring of the old Establishment. The telling clue, the one that tomorrow's historians will probably overlook, is that both candidates view their families' dynastic achievements—their long records of public service, their decades of toil in the Senate, the intelligence services, the White House itself—as something of a liability. Julius Caesar used to boast of his family's descent from the kings of Rome and the immortal gods. Look for George Bush and Al Gore to be somewhat quieter about the illustriousness of their own families' pasts. Fair enough; but *should* the governor and the vice president turn their backs on what they are? By all means, let them engage in a little faux populism to win the prize; but shouldn't they, after the election is over, do what they can to revive the traditions that created them, made them the men they have become?

The answer, I think, is no.

RITES OF INITIATION

What distinguishes a public-service caste from a collection of government functionaries—mere bureaucrats and placeholders—is its participants' belief that they have devoted themselves to nobler ends and higher purposes. They have been inducted into a tradition as old as the Greco-Roman cult of the city itself; they believe, with Aristotle, that politics elevates the soul, brings a man a little farther from the beasts, a little closer to the gods. If this sounds quasi-religious, it is. To its defenders, the classical city was not, as Saint Augustine had it, a man-made institution, inferior to the City of God. The secular city was of divine ordination; it enjoyed the patronage of a pagan god. Its citizens were priests; they maintained the temples and the sacred fire; they offered up, in the name of Athena or Zeus, their liturgies (the word originally meant "public acts") for the good of the *civitas*.

Hence the conceit of the public servant who has been bred in traditions that derive ultimately from the ancient city: My soul is a little greater than yours. Public-service castes are based on the same principles that make fraternities, clubs, and oligarchies work: the initiation of the novice or ephebe into secret, soul-expanding mysteries, and the engendering in him of that sense of pride which comes with the possession of esoteric knowledge. This is why public-service castes inevitably acquire an aristocratic coloring; you can't let too many people in on the secret. Patrician clans like the Claudii and the Julii exercised a disproportionate political influence at Rome, just as Adamses, Lees, Roosevelts, Kennedys, and Bushes have exercised a disproportionate political influence in America. In both republics, institutions helped perpetuate the mysteries, the etiquette—the patterns of behavior and idiosyncrasies of style—peculiar to the governing class. Young Romans were sent to Athens to study with the philosophers and take part in the secret rites at Eleusis; young Americans were sent to prep schools in New England and, in college, were received into orders like Skull and Bones, Porcellian, and Ivy.

True, no country can long endure if its political classes are entirely closed to merit. Plebeian families were eventually given a share of power in Rome. Britain's 18th-century Whigs, who for a time constituted a very nearly Venetian oligarchy, took bright young commoners like Edmund Burke into their ranks. Evan Thomas and Walter Isaacson devote some touching pages in their book *The Wise Men* to describing how John J. McCloy, the scholarship boy, was tapped for membership in the ultimate fraternity, the ethereal eating house where Dean Acheson, Averell Harriman, Chip Bohlen, and Bob Lovett hashed out the nation's destiny. And yet: However meritocratic it becomes, a public-service caste, if it is to survive, must retain some sense of heroic exclusivity, just as it must give the world the impression that its members possess a secret wisdom unavailable to the crowd. We're in. Everyone else is out.

SATELLITE FEED AT THE RUBICON

When the Founders set up the American Republic, they did more than design buildings that looked like those of Rome and Athens. They read deeply in the classical texts. They were inspired by the ancient cult of the city. They named their towns after the great cities of antiquity—Utica, Troy, Syracuse, Carthage—and talked endlessly about the need for civic virtue. With good reason: The institutions of civil society at the end of the 18th century, although beginning to assume their modern form, were still extraordinarily fragile. Education, property, and information were much less widely distributed than they are today. A small number of people possessed the bulk of the goods. A man like Thomas Jefferson had more education than most of his contemporaries; he had more property; thanks to a network of family relations and friends among the landed gentry, he was better informed about the state of affairs. You *needed* to involve a man like that in the public service. And because a man like that was often more enamored of his books and his farm than he was of politics (Jefferson certainly was), you needed a cult of public service to draw him away from the library or the plough and bring him into the hurly-burly of the forum. As one of George Eliot's characters says, it was "better for a man of his position to be in Parliament on the wrong side than not be in at all"—better, not just for him, but for the whole community.

It's different today. Education, property, and information are much more widely diffused. You no longer need a cult of public service to motivate the best men to go into government. You no longer need to persuade them that politics is the highest and most fulfilling occupation a man can have. You no longer need a heroic political code grounded in the

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idea that a statesman's achievements are more glorious than everybody else's. David Brooks can relax: If a highly educated Bobo opts to start a dot-com or a hedge fund rather than go into government, he won't be missed at the political table the way he would have been in the 18th century. There are plenty of other educated people to take his place.

As access to information has improved, the institutions of civil society have become correspondingly stronger. In the 18th century, the only thing that prevented a few politicians in a room from making dirty deals was their own sense of public honor. Today there is likely to be a camera and a microphone in the room, and a young staffer with friends at a webzine hungry for incriminating gossip. There is likely to be a reporter at the door, and a prosecutor round the corner, all of them powerful deterrents to corruption. In 18th-century America, as in ancient Rome, the political classes—the Washingtons and Hamiltons, Brutuses and Catos, with their high, severe notions of honor and virtue—were all that stood between liberty and despotism, between a well-ordered civil society and the tyranny of the sword. The cult of public service was the best they could do in those days—and it left a lot to be desired. The Roman republic, after all, fell; the despotism of the Caesars triumphed. The virtuecrats failed.

Despotism might have triumphed in 18th-century America, too, if Washington's sense of public honor had been less fastidious. But in the more stable, if less romantic, world of the developed nations today, there is less need for the magnificent virtue Washington possessed. Caesar and Augustus could never have gotten away with what they did in the age of CNN and the Internet, and neither could many of the dictators of the last century. Just *try* crossing the Rubicon when its banks are jammed with satellite trucks and reporters giving live TV feeds. You'll think twice about burning the Reichstag if you know you're going to be cross-examined by Tim Russert on *Meet the Press*. It's what might be called Clinton's Law: If a president cannot commit a peccadillo in the study off the Oval Office without the public learning about it, it's unlikely that he can set in motion a complicated plot to overthrow the Constitution.

The strength of civil society in the United States today means that it's no longer necessary for us to make up to politicians in prestige and glory what we fail to pay them in dollars. We can get the same quality of political leadership we enjoy now—some of it good, some of it less so—without awarding politicians a premium in psychic income. There will always be plenty of people who simply prefer the excitement of politics—power, motorcades, all the rest of it—to the drudgery of another stock deal. Besides, the impoverished public servant these days can always make it back later—on Wall Street, in Silicon Valley, or as a D.C. consultant.

POST-POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

But is there any harm in continuing to dangle civic lollipops in front of potential leaders? There is. It's not just that the continued emphasis on the primacy of politics is unfair to those who perform other, no less valuable, forms of service. It's that the belief in the quasi-mystical beneficence of public service reinforces all kinds of wrongheaded thinking about how much good politicians actually do, and about how the societies they lead actually make progress. By exalting a public-service ethos, we encourage the idea that those who have been initiated in its traditions, with their fancy degrees and vast experience of the *cursus honorum*, possess a preternatural power to oversee the nation's great leaps forward. The politician becomes a kind of hero-shaman. We talk about his prophetic "vision," as though he had been studying the wisdom, not of focus groups, but of the oracle at Delphi. We praise him for his wizard-like ability to superintend the nation's progress, even as we rely on him to send the right witch doctor to the Federal Reserve to play medicine man to the economy. In our modern political mythology, the witch doctor is, with the Great White Chief himself and the Treasury secretary, the architect of the nation's prosperity—part of our holy trinity of national hope.

It might have been necessary, in the long centuries during which the institutions of civil society were slowly evolving, to mystify politics this way, to exaggerate politicians' powers. The period between the emergence, in classical antiquity, of the Western conception of political order and the full ripening of civil society in the 18th and 19th centuries was, in many ways, an Age of Politics. Civilization had emerged from the shadows of the Bronze Age, but the institutions of civil society were not yet mature, and politics held the key to their fate. During this period it made sense for people—from Aristotle and Cicero to John Adams and James Madison—to view politics as a special case. In the 20th century, the ascendancy of recidivist creeds that glorified public power—socialism, Communism, National Socialism—required the Western democracies temporarily to revive the traditions of the Age of Politics in order to combat the threat. But the threat has passed. We can now move beyond the idea of politics as a privileged discipline.

Polls show that fewer mothers today want to see their children grow up to be president than in the past. That's not entirely bad. Mom has grasped what some politicians haven't: that we're moving into a post-political age, and that there are many ways for people to render distinguished service. To succeed today, a politician needs to help people make the transition to the post-political era. And he needs to understand the new rules of a changed world.

Here are three of them: 1) Don't assume that politics—the creation of another law, another program, another adjustment to the tax code—is the best way to solve a problem. Turn to politics only if other solutions (market-based solutions, faith-based solutions, etc.) are unlikely to work. 2) Don't pretend to be the Wizard of Oz; be honest about the fact that politics is no longer the principal driver of history, that the future is being carved out each day by millions of people through the individual decisions they make. 3) Do what you can to mitigate what might be called the Russian Mobster Effect. When a creed that glorifies public power collapses, people often turn to the worship of cold cash instead. This, of course, is spiritually deadening. A post-political leader needs to keep his constituents' eyes focused on higher things.

We've reached, not the end of history, but the end of history as politics. Strong political leadership will of course be needed in the future; but so will other kinds of leadership. It's a brand new world. **NR**

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The Hezbollah in America

An alarming network

DANIEL PIPES

MOHAMAD YOUSSEF HAMMOUD, an 18-year-old Shiite Muslim from Lebanon, arrived at New York's Kennedy Airport on June 6, 1992. He had come, accompanied by two close male relatives, from Caracas, Venezuela, where each of them had plunked down $200 for a counterfeit U.S. visa. American border guards caught the fraud, and the trio did not exactly begin their American careers with distinction; but they did begin them in character—with a crime. The U.S. government also responded in character, just as it would many times over the next eight years: It allowed them into the country.

Then followed a fairly typical sequence of events for illegal immigrants. In November 1992, Hammoud claimed political asylum on the (dubious) grounds that Israel's Lebanese allies were out to get him, making this fear his justification for buying a fake U.S. visa. A year later, in December 1993, an immigration judge turned down this transparent ploy and ordered Hammoud deported. To no avail: Hammoud promptly filed an appeal, which permitted him to stay longer. In December 1994, while still awaiting a verdict, he married an American named Sabina Edwards, and this gave him legal standing to apply for permanent residency. The Immigration and Naturalization Service did some sleuthing and found both the marriage certificate and the woman's birth certificate fraudulent, so in August 1996 Hammoud was again ordered deported, this time within the month.

The resourceful Hammoud then went underground. In May 1997, he married a second American, Jessica Wedel. In September 1997, while still married to Wedel, he took a third wife, Angela Tsioumas. (That she was already married to another man perhaps evened the score.) The INS, not too adept at record-keeping, mislaid its file on Hammoud's earlier marriage fraud and never noticed that both of the nuptial pair were married to others; so, on the basis of Hammoud's marriage to Tsioumas, the agency granted him conditional residency in July 1998. Only in October 1998 did Hammoud get around to divorcing Wedel.

To make matters even more interesting, the Hammoud-Tsioumas bond turns out to have been a complete fiction, just a way for him to acquire citizenship and for her to earn a few thousand dollars. Hammoud appears to have (truly) married a woman in Lebanon in 1999; Tsioumas has bragged that, as soon as Hammoud no longer needs her, she will marry other would-be Americans "for the right price."

One might imagine that Hammoud's desperate efforts to remain in the U.S. signaled his deep affection for the land of the free; or, at any rate, his longing to walk our streets paved with gold. But one would be wrong. Like so many other Shiites from the shantytowns south of Beirut, this young man has adopted the Ayatollah Khomeini's brand of extremist Islam and virulent anti-Americanism. As a member of Hezbollah, the main Islamist terrorist and political organization of Lebanon, Hammoud came here not as an immigrant, to become American—but as a missionary, to bring Hezbollah's message into enemy territory.

Information about Hammoud is available in a powerful and detailed 85-page federal affidavit filed in late July in the U.S. District Court in Charlotte, North Carolina, based on the reports of six cooperating witnesses and five secret informants, physical surveillance, financial records, and much else. Hammoud, it seems, received military training in Hezbollah camps in Lebanon and boasts of being "well-connected" to Hezbollah leaders. One informant calls Hammoud "100 percent Hezbollah." Another thinks him dangerous because he "would likely assist in carrying out any action against United States interests" if Hezbollah asked him to. A third says Hammoud "would not hesitate" to commit a terrorist act in the United States for Hezbollah.

He's hardly the first of this type, nor the most famous (that distinction probably belongs to New York's blind sheikh). In a bitter and ironic development little noted by Americans, many recent immigrants arrive, as Martin Peretz puts it, "not with the immigrant's psychological one-way ticket, not with the immigrant's love for America, but with a peculiar immigrant's hatred of America." Islamists like Hammoud are perhaps the most significant of this breed, intensely hating the U.S. and all it represents, but also savoring the country's freedom of expression and of movement, its rule of law, its open institutions, its fine communications and transportation, and its superpower status. They also appreciate its affluence. As Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and the other once-rich Middle East states curtail spending, Islamist groups like Hezbollah increasingly seek funding from coreligionists in the West.

Hammoud settled in Charlotte, and was busy on behalf of Hezbollah from the moment he arrived there. He organized his two brothers and three cousins, plus other Shiites from his old neighborhood in Lebanon, into what one informant terms "an active group" of Hezbollah members. They arranged nocturnal meetings in one another's houses several times a week and engaged in morale-boosting activities. They sang rousing Hezbollah songs (downloaded by Hammoud from the Internet), heard inspiring speeches of Khomeini and Hezbollah's leader, watched videotapes of Hezbollah victories over Israel, and discussed Hezbollah "activities and operations." One person who attended these meetings—the most recent of which took place on July 13, 2000—calls their atmosphere "extremely anti-United States."

Having heated their emotions, Hammoud solicited donations for Hezbollah from his group and worked with them on a simple but audacious fundraising scheme for Hezbollah. It happened that these Muslims lived in North Carolina, home to the American tobacco industry and a state whose government adds a tax of just five cents per cigarette pack. Many of their Lebanese Shiite buddies live in the Detroit area, where the

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State of Michigan charges 75 cents per pack. All they had to do was drive a van the 680 miles from Charlotte to Detroit, a 13-hour trip, carrying 800 to 1,500 cartons of cigarettes, and they would net upwards of $3,000. The scam required no special skills, and it made good use of existing pro-Hezbollah networks.

By early 1995, the smuggling operation was in place. The Hezbollahis bought tens of thousands of cigarette cartons at North Carolina's many tobacco outlets, loaded these into rental vans, made a quick round trip to Detroit, and returned the van. In the period 1996-99, Hammoud alone bought nearly $300,000 worth of cigarettes on ten credit cards. The smugglers spent some of the earnings on themselves; Hammoud lived in a middle-class neighborhood, another suspect bought himself two luxury cars, and still others started what the affidavit terms "semi-legitimate" businesses: a tobacco shop to acquire cigarettes in bulk and a Lebanese restaurant to launder the resulting funds.

Starting in 1996, they also sent large sums to Hezbollah. No estimate is available for the total amount transferred, but the affidavit charges Hammoud and four others with smuggling currency and indicates that just one suspect, Ali Hussein Darwiche, sent over $1 million. In addition, several of those arrested stand accused of sending technical materials such as digital photo equipment, computers, global positioning systems, and night-vision goggles to Lebanon. Not surprisingly, one informant states that Hezbollah "sanctioned" the Charlotte group's criminal activities.

But the cigarette scam was too obvious, especially as the smugglers kept getting arrested for driving offenses, and having large numbers of cigarettes (121,500, 436,500, 1,412,400) and dollars ($17,000, $45,922) confiscated. By 1996, the authorities figured out what was going on. A slew of local, state, and federal agents investigated, and made further discoveries.

First, cigarette-running turned out to be just a part of a larger pattern of criminal activity. Nearly all of the Lebanese suspects reached the U.S. through deception, either visa forgery or bribing a State Department official. This bunch lied about everything—claiming to speak English when they could not, creating children out of thin air, denying the existence of close relatives living in the U.S. They nearly all contracted fake marriages, with one man arranging for himself, his brother, his sister, and her husband each to marry Americans. (Curiously, the Lebanese men paid around $3,500 each to the American women, but a Lebanese woman paid just $1,500 to an American man.)

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It is dismaying to look at this bunch of criminal aliens and political extremists, many of whom have been expelled more than once from the U.S., and find them still here.

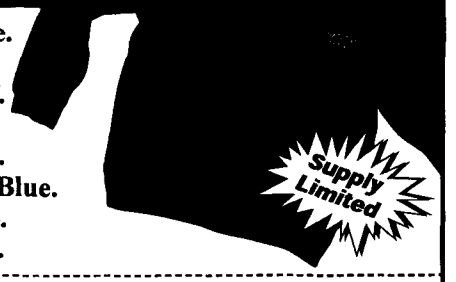
■

Once settled, the Lebanese suspects began a minor crime wave. They relied on fraudulent Social Security numbers, passed bad checks, used stolen credit cards, passed stolen goods via mail drops, and engaged in forgery. One gang member, known for his ability to take on multiple identities, used so many false names that he had to pull a book out of a friend's safe and study it before going to the bank. He also became a specialist in "busting out" of credit cards—making half a million dollars since 1995 by getting a high credit limit, charging on it to the maximum, then disappearing without paying it off. Tax returns from gang members were virtuoso exercises in creative accounting: Hammoud and his fake wife Tsioumas made bank deposits in 1997 totaling $737,318, but reported total wages of just $24,693. The next year, another conspirator deposited $90,903, but listed no income at all. Hammoud's cousin owned a house-painting company; naturally, he employed illegal aliens to staff it, paid them under the table, and skipped on taxes. These are not just crooks, but a whole subculture steeped in criminality.

Also, law enforcement observed a preparation for violence. Associates of the suspects built up an arsenal, including a fully automatic AK-47-style assault rifle, with which they, along with Hammoud, regularly practiced—in what a witness described as "paramilitary-style training" in a remote shooting range east of Charlotte.

Finally, on July 21 of this year, about 250 law-enforcement officers swooped down on the group, arresting 17 in the Charlotte area and one in Michigan. Eleven are Lebanese Muslims, seven are the American citizens who took money for phony marriages. Charges include conspiracy to launder money, conspiracy to traffic in contraband cigarettes, immigration-law violations, and attempted bribery. Pending the results of a search now under way of businesses, cars, computers, and the like, other expected charges include RICO fraud and providing material support to Hezbollah, a designated foreign-terrorist organization. These are serious charges: Cigarette smuggling carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison per charge and a $250,000 fine. Money-laundering carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison per charge and a $500,000 fine.

THE OFFICIAL
NR WINDSHIRT



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The arrests were top news in Lebanon, where Hezbollah predictably dismissed the charges: "Hezbollah does not have any organized group" in the U.S., declared Na'im Qasim, its deputy leader. He attributed the arrests to American officials' "need to create an imaginary victory" to make up for their defeats.

This case opens an important window on the small but worrisome subculture of Islamist immigrants who despise America even while living in it, who flout its laws and actively aid its enemies. The information from Charlotte prompts several reflections:

First, it confirms the inaccuracy of Islamist whining about American bias against Muslims. (One friend of the suspects told reporters, "The FBI took the Koran from my home. It just shows the real reason they are doing this"; the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee warned that their treatment "could lead to discrimination and hate crimes.") Immigration and law-enforcement authorities were excessively lenient; note how Hammoud kept beating the system.

Second, the Charlotte case again confirms that Islamist money is flowing from North America to the Middle East, not the other way around. Besides Hezbollah, other organizations funded from here include Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Algerian radicals. Middle Eastern governments note this pattern with alarm (Tunisia's president protests that the U.S. has become "the rearguard headquarters for fundamentalist terrorists"), but it has yet to be taken seriously by American leaders. How many more Charlotte-like webs are out there?

Third, the Lebanese suspects showed a contempt toward the U.S. that bordered on the bizarre. Though acting on behalf of a devoutly Muslim organization, they felt entitled to break American laws at whim, without taking even elementary precautions. One defendant charged $45,677 to one credit card for cigarette purchases in a single calendar year; on trips to Detroit, the alleged smugglers paid for gasoline along the way with charge cards, not even trying to hide their movements. Even after arrest, they remained arrogantly unconcerned; according to the *Charlotte Observer*, at their court hearing, the defendants "smiled, laughed and made jokes. They asked which of their homes, cars and bank accounts had been seized by the government." This nihilism, quite common among uneducated Islamist immigrants, portends trouble.

Fourth, in this case, as in so many other instances of would-be terrorist violence, the authorities bungled matters; if not for alert local officers piecing suspicious activities into a pattern, the scam would still be going on. The INS showed itself to be hapless, not seeing through one fake marriage after another, losing records, and allowing deportees to disappear without a trace. The State Department proved susceptible to bribery. The FBI knew nothing until late in the game. This is frequently the pattern: In at least five cases over the past 15 years, the local cop with eyes open was the key to stopping a major terrorist action. And while lucky breaks are very welcome, it is dismaying to see national institutions caught off guard.

It is even more dismaying to look at this bunch of criminal aliens and political extremists, many of whom have been expelled more than once from the U.S., and find them still here. Given this history, it's a pretty safe bet that most of them will *still* be here another eight years from now, probably joined by an even larger number of their like. **NR**

The Future of English

A mighty language and its prospects

JOHN DERBYSHIRE

We live in an age of Anglophone triumphalism. The mélange of low-German dialects carried to Britain on the tongues of mercenary war bands a millennium and a half ago has now become the first language of some 350 million people and the second language of at least a billion more. When an Indonesian businessman meets a customer from Finland, they converse in English. Airline pilots flying international routes communicate with their controllers in English. Seventy-six percent of the content of the Internet is in English. (The runners-up are, in order: Japanese, French, German, and Chinese.) English is the world language, and this will become more true as time goes on—these are assumptions most of us carry around in our heads without much examination. Are they true?

There are a number of reasons for thinking that English may be at, or perhaps even past, the high tide of its influence. To begin with, the proportion of humanity speaking English as its first language is declining. Samuel Huntington, in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, gives the following numbers: 9.8 percent in 1958, 7.6 percent in 1992. If the rate of decline is linear we must now be hovering just over 7 percent. To be sure, this decline is relative, not absolute. The populations of the great English-speaking nations are not falling. Nor are the people of those nations switching to any other first language, even where there are strongly felt linguistic issues in controversy. Irishmen show even less inclination to speak Irish than their grandfathers did; the enthusiasm of Francophone Canadians for their language has not infected their English-speaking compatriots; and Americans, despite all the blandishments of the "multicultural" hustlers, are pleased to resist Spanish. The decline in the proportion of the world's people who have English as their first language is simply a consequence of those people being First Worlders with low birthrates. The rest of the world is outbreeding them. Since no English-speaking nation is in the imperialism business any longer, our language is left with its home islands, the child colonies of the early-modern period, and a scattering of nations once ruled from London (or, like the Philippines, from Washington) but with indigenous cultures of their own into which English has been able to put down some shallow roots.

Granted that English as a first language is in relative decline, may we not still console ourselves with the thought that it has no challenger as the preferred second language

Mr. Derbyshire is a contributing editor of NATIONAL REVIEW.

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over a large part of the world? Russian imperialism turns out to have been a damp firecracker, and the post-Sputnik enthusiasm for learning Russian seems ludicrous now. In the 21st century you will learn Russian only if you want to read Pushkin in the original. The present fad for Chinese will go the same way unless that nation can shake off its addiction to despotic government, a development of which there is currently no sign at all. No other language is even a candidate for worldwide acceptance. Air-traffic controllers will continue to speak to pilots in English for as long as they need to speak to them at all—perhaps for another generation, after which automation will take over completely. Even then, will not the world still need a *lingua franca?* And those nations once under English-speaking rule—won't they be glad to have got a head start from their former imperialist masters?

Not necessarily. In these latter cases, English has been accepted against the grain of national, racial, and anti-imperialist emotions because of its convenience and neutrality. A country with a multitude of quarreling tribes or sects needs some common tongue, and it is best that it should be one that is *hors de combat*. Nigeria, where anyone with any education at all above the elementary-school level can speak English, offers a good example. Yet even these common-sense considerations have not helped English to hold its own everywhere. During the years when Julius Nyerere ruled Tanzania (1962–85), he promoted Swahili as the only proper common language for his people, with the result that one now meets college-educated Tanzanians who can hardly speak English at all.

Even India, often cited as the one nation where English is an indispensable medium of exchange for myriad sects and races, is slipping the leash. Samuel Huntington quotes two professors of English at New Delhi University: "[W]hen one travels from Kashmir down to the southernmost tip at Kanyakumari, the communication link is best maintained through a form of Hindi rather than through English." It is true that English is the common tongue of a small, well-educated elite of Indians. Democracy militates against established elites, though; as, of course, do more radical social changes. The Russian ruling classes of the Napoleonic age who populate *War and Peace* spoke French among themselves. A hundred years later, as Tsarist Russia began to modernize and the towering achievements of 19th-century Russian literature generated pride in the national language, that nation's elites were using French less and less—and after Lenin's revolution, of course, not at all.

COME THE TRANSLATE-O-MATIC

If the peace of the world can be maintained, and technological progress continued, there is a larger threat to the supremacy of English as a second language, and indeed to multilingualism in general: computer translation. Now, if you have actually tried to use any of the current translation software you are probably smiling at this point. These programs are awful. They cannot even distinguish between ordinary nouns and proper names. I recently went on the Internet to look for a biography of the poet Witter Bynner. My search engine, which trawls through sites in all languages and translates the material into English before presenting it, located a biography on Amazon's German website and listed the author's last name as "Strength." The author is, in fact, the American critic James Kraft.

These deficiencies, however, are those of an immature technology, one that can be expected to develop rather rapidly over the next decade or two. Recent news from this field is very hopeful. The drop in the price of computer memory to near zero, and the rise in speed of retrieval from that memory to near infinity, has meant that the knotty analytical problems described by Steven Pinker in *The Language Instinct* can to some degree be bypassed by simply drawing on great masses of linguistic data. With a huge database of recorded utterances in different languages, indexed by comparative frequencies and contextual clues, translation can be done by brute force, without the machine needing to "understand" much. Twenty years from now we shall have hand-held language translators.

It will, of course, be rather easy to outfox them. Every language offers no end of possible utterances. Without trying very hard you can say an English sentence that has probably never been said before. My own children constantly generate remarks like: "My Power Ranger fell in the sump pump." Such oddities will, however, present no obstacle to the swift acceptance of computer translation, once it passes a certain threshold of accuracy. New technology always offers trade-offs to its adopters. Machines only ever approximate the living world; we must always go halfway to meet them. When humanity switched from riding horses to driving cars, we easily resigned ourselves to the fact that this new aid to locomotion could not jump fences. Your $69.99 translation gadget will stumble over subtle allusions or constructions; but you will get accustomed to that and just stop using them in its presence. Nor will your Translate-O-Matic be any use in the classic science-fiction situation of a first encounter with alien civilization: Their language would have to be "learned," added to the database. For the 4,000 tongues of Planet Earth, though, machine translation will work very nicely, once their few trillion most common utterances are logged into the database and properly cross-referenced.

The implications of this are wonderful. Until well within living memory the making of mathematical tables, ephemerides, and the like was done by human beings using mechanical calculating machines to perform millions of repetitive arithmetic operations—mental drudgery on a staggering scale, the equivalent of coal-mining with pick and shovel. Nowadays any child can churn out those tables in minutes on a home computer. Before long, language learning may seem as antique and unnecessary a skill as the computation of ten-figure logarithms by hand—a great relief to those of us who are hopeless as linguists. (A category that includes disproportionately many English-speakers. In the old French Foreign Legion it used to be said that the English recruits were the last to get promoted because they were slowest to master the giving of orders in French.)

If this does come to pass, there will be very little need for a universal language, and foreign-language learning will be practiced only by eccentrics, immigrants, and ardent lovers. I can't see why anybody should mind this. From the point of

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What We Know About Ecstasy

What is Ecstasy?

Ecstasy, MDMA,[1] is a semi-synthetic drug patented by Merck Pharmaceutical Company in 1914 and abandoned for 60 years. In the late 1970s and early 1980s psychiatrists and psychotherapists in the US used it to facilitate psychotherapy.[2] In 1985 its growing recreational use caused the DEA to criminalize it.

Ecstasy's effects last 3 to 6 hours. It is a mood elevator that produces feelings of empathy, openness and well-being. People who take it at all night "rave" dances say they enjoy dancing and feeling close to others. It does not produce violence or physical addiction.[3]

What are the greatest risks from Ecstasy?

Death is a possibility when using MDMA. According to coroner reports, there were nine Ecstasy-related deaths (three of these involved Ecstasy alone) in 1998.[4] Some of these deaths are related to overheating. MDMA slightly raises body temperature. This is potentially lethal in hot environments where there is vigorous dancing and the lack of adequate fluid replacement.[5] Many of these tragic deaths were preventable with simple harm reduction techniques such as having free water available and rooms where people can rest and relax.

One of the recent risks associated with Ecstasy is the possibility of obtaining adulterated drugs that may be more toxic than MDMA. Some of the reported deaths attributed to Ecstasy are likely caused by other, more dangerous drugs.[6] Deaths from adulterated drugs are another consequence of a zero tolerance approach. While we do not encourage Ecstasy use, we recommend that the drug be tested for purity to minimize the risk from adulterated drugs by those who consume it.[7] However, MDMA itself has risks. For example, it raises blood pressure and heart rate. Persons with known cardiovascular or heart disease should not take MDMA.

Recent studies have indicated that individuals who have used MDMA may have decreased performance in memory tests compared to nonusers. These studies are presently controversial because they involved people who used a variety of other drugs. Furthermore, it is difficult to rule out possible pre-existing differences between research subjects and controls.[8]

What is a rave?

Raves are all-night dance parties popular with young people that feature electronic music. A variety of drug use, from alcohol to nicotine, and including ecstasy, occurs at raves. Hysteria is leading to criminalization of raves, thus pushing them underground and into less safe and responsible settings.

Let's deal with legal and illegal drugs knowledgeably, understand their relative dangers, act prudently and avoid hysteria.

For more information, visit: www.csdp.org, Common Sense for Drug Policy, Kevin B. Zeese, President
703-354-9050, 703-354-5695 (Fax), info @ csdp.org

1, 3 & 4 - methylenedioxymethamphetamine. **2** - Greer G. and Tolbert R., A Method of Conducting Therapeutic Sessions with MDMA. In Journal of Psychoactive Drugs 30 (1998) 4:371.379. For research on the therapeutic use of MDMA see: www.maps.org. **3** - Beck J. and Rosenbaum M., Pursuit of Ecstasy: The MDMA Experience. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994. **4** - Drug Abuse Warning Network, Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Report of March 21, 2000. (This was a special report because the published report only includes drugs where there were over 10 deaths.) **5** - C.M. Milroy; J.C. Clark; A.R.W. Forrest, Pathology of deaths associated with "ecstasy" and "eve" misuse, Journal of Clinical Pathology Vol 49 (1996) 149-153. **6** - Laboratory Pill Analysis Program, DanceSafe. For results visit www.DanceSafe.org. See also, Byard RW et al., Amphetamine derivative fatalities in South Australia—is "Ecstasy" the culprit?, American Journal of Forensic Medical Pathology, 998 (Sep) 19(3): 261-5. **7** - DanceSafe provides testing equipment and a testing service which can be used to determine what a substance is. See www.DanceSafe.org. **8** - E. Gouzoulis-Mayfrank; J. Daumann; F. Tuchtenhagen; S. Pelz; S. Becker; H.J. Kunert; B. Fimm; H. Sass; Impaired cognitive performance in drug-free users of recreational ecstasy (MDMA), by Journal Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry Vol 68, June 2000, 719-725; K.I.Bolla; U.D.; McCann; G.A. Ricaurte; Memory impairment in abstinent MDMA ('Ecstasy') users, by Neurology Vol 51, Dec 1998, 1532-1537.

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view of conservative patriots, it may even prove a boon. Our language will be ours, our own private family joke; there will be no reason for anyone else to take an interest in it. The horrid chore of learning a foreign language, and the humiliating awareness that, after years of grueling study, we speak it no better than a native five-year-old, will be banished from our lives. Good riddance!

Supposing all the above to be true, we can form a rough picture of English in the world later this century. Those peoples that speak English as their first language will still do so, but their numbers will be slipping below 5 percent of the human race. In many of the places where English was left behind by a retreating imperialist power, it will have withered and died. (In Hong Kong today, this process is almost visible.) With the advent of reasonably reliable translation gadgets, the need for a world language, and for the learning of foreign languages in general, will have slackened off. Fewer people will learn English; fewer people will learn *any* second language.

A LONG, MIGHTY RUN

Given all of this, can we say anything about the future state of English in its base countries—in particular, of American English? Here it becomes really difficult to keep a sensible perspective. Any educated person over the age of 40 has moments of curmudgeonly doubt about whether the great richness of our language can be maintained. Usages and allusions that we take for granted are being lost daily. Doing contract work for a Wall Street firm recently, I was teamed up with a bright young woman just two or three years out of an extremely expensive liberal education. Apropos some impossible project we had been assigned, I said I thought we were being asked to make bricks without straw. My colleague squinted at me in bafflement. "Bricks? Straw? What on earth are you *talking* about, John?"

Similar misgivings are aroused by the state of our public speech. I was struck, reading Paul Johnson's biography of Queen Elizabeth I, by the grace and vigor of the English language 400 years ago. Even bureaucrats wrote exquisite prose. Here is a routine departmental memo on the price of corn in 1595:

> Her Highness doth verily think the fault thereof, in part, to be the covetous disposition of such as be farmers and corn-masters, that not acknowledging God's goodness, do seek immoderate gain by enhancing the prices of corn and grain, to the great oppression of the poorer sort.

Whatever e-mails are flying back and forth in Washington about the current price of gas, I doubt that any of them is couched in such elegance. Elizabeth's speech to her army at Tilbury might have been written by Shakespeare, though in fact the words were her own.

> I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England *too*; and I think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm . . .

Compare that to the dreary state of our own public rhetoric, lamented at length in this magazine recently by Michael Knox Beran ("Tongues of Tin," July 3). Unless something happens in the next six months, Bill Clinton will step down after eight years in office leaving behind not a single memorable utterance, other than those that are risible or shameful—a remarkable negative achievement. The condition of our literature is even worse. Poetry is in a desperate state: Recite four lines by any living poet. Prose is somewhat healthier, though it is difficult to imagine that anyone living in the year 2400 would wish to read any of our productions.

Does this mean our language is at the end of its tether? Is it, as well as our civilization, exhausted at last? I doubt it. Languages flourish and then quiesce in ways that are very mysterious. If English in 1600 was at a peak of strength and beauty, in 1700 it was comparatively dull, and in 1800 just girding itself for the glories of the 19th century. So with other tongues: The wonderful efflorescence of poetry in eighth- and ninth-century China has never been equaled in that nation, and the majestic verse and rhetoric that characterized the few decades of late-republican and early-imperial Rome had few peers in the subsequent half-millennium of empire. Let us preserve what we can, and hope for better days.

■

Is our language at the end of its tether? Is it, as well as our civilization, exhausted at last? I doubt it. Languages flourish and then quiesce in ways that are very mysterious.

■

Conservatives instinctively resist change, of course; yet language change *will* happen, whether we resist or not. The greatest of all conservatives, Samuel Johnson, remarked in the preface to his mighty dictionary that: "[T]o enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength." More recently, the English writer J. B. Priestley had this to say in his 1934 *English Journey*:

> If we are a nation of shopkeepers, then what a shop! There is Shakespeare in the window, to begin with . . . [W]e stagger beneath our inheritance. But let us burn every book, tear down every memorial, turn every cathedral and college into an engineering shop, rather than grow cold and petrify, rather than forget that inner glowing tradition of the English spirit.

The colossal superiority of Anglo-Saxon civilization, which has spread our beautiful language across the globe, is fueled by a restlessness, an endless pushing forward, that carries that language with it, discarding what it does not need. Conservatism is not a devotion to stasis but a determination to bring the best of the past with us into the unknowable future. It is a worthy fight, to preserve old allusions, old books, old words; but the fight will often be lost. Who now reads Carlyle for pleasure, or *The Faerie Queene*? The King James Bible and Shakespeare; Jane Austen and Keats; Mark Twain and Longfellow—these may recede from everyday consciousness. But the language they enriched will not have forgotten them. **NR**

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DOCUMENT EXTRACT
VPOTUS WIRELESS
COMMUNICATION

8/6 11:14 AM
VPOTUS: Hello, Joe.
UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: Hi, Al. How's your weekend been?
VPOTUS: Very fine, Joe. And yours?
UMV: Pretty good, Al.
[27-second pause]
UMV: Um...Al?
VPOTUS: Yes, Joe?
UMV: Is there any reason you called?
VPOTUS: Yes, Joe. Yes, there is. I was hoping that you'd agree to serve as my running mate.
UMV: Al, I'd be honored.
VPOTUS: Great, Joe. This is just great.
[28-second pause]
UMV: Well, um...if there's nothing else—
VPOTUS: Well, gosh, Joe. There is. Just a small thing, really.
UMV: What is it?
VPOTUS: Just some small stuff. Like parental notification, school vouchers, missile defense, Social Security reform...
UMV: Yeah, I guess we're not in sync on those things, are we?
VPOTUS: I guess what I was hoping for is some kind of statement from you, in which you clarify your position on some of that stuff. You know, sort of say, "Gosh, I may have been taken out of context," or, "My position on that one has evolved," you know. Sort of like what I've done with abortion.
UMV: And tobacco.
VPOTUS: Right.
UMV: And gun control.
VPOTUS: Yes, Joe. Thanks for keeping track.
UMV: So you want me to say that I've "evolved" in my thinking on Social Security reform, school vouchers, and missile defense?
VPOTUS: I'd really appreciate it. And can I tell you something? As someone who's done a lot of it lately, it's only, like, the first issue that hurts.
UMV: Well, okay. I don't feel too comfortable, but I guess I—
VPOTUS: Great, Joe. Just great. You'll see. It'll have zero effect on your credibility or integrity.
UMV: Okay. Anything else?
VPOTUS: Oh, gosh. Almost forgot. One last tiny detail just almost slipped my mind.
UMV: What is it?
VPOTUS: It's just so teeny-tiny insignificant, is all.
UMV: What is it?
VPOTUS: Just, when you have a moment, mention to the press as how you kind of think that Bill Clinton is kind of one of our greatest presidents. Just whenever. Today, tomorrow, you know. At your convenience.
UMV: But I'm on the record as saying—
VPOTUS: Yes, of course. And we all deeply respect your integrity. But, see, we're trying to thread the needle here and give credit to Bill for being one of our greatest presidents while at the same time acknowledging his gross immoral misconduct and appalling lack of character.
UMV: Don't those two things contradict each other?
VPOTUS: Not necessarily. There's some wiggle room.
UMV: There is?
VPOTUS: And we'd love it if you could wiggle around in it.
UMV: Oy vey.
VPOTUS: Well, that kind of brings me to my other question.
UMV: The Jewish thing?
VPOTUS: No. Well, yes. It's that little hat.
UMV: The yarmulke?
VPOTUS: Yeah. Donna Brazile thinks it has a whole Mike-Dukakis-in-the-tank-helmet vibe.
UMV: Al, the yarmulke is a symbol of man's humility before God. It's one of the most ancient traditions of my faith.
VPOTUS: So *yes* on Social Security reform, school vouchers, missile defense, and parental notification; but *no* on the little hat?
UMV: My yarmulke stays put, Al.
VPOTUS: Understood, understood. I'm not being a bigot, here. Please, don't think I'm trying to put your Jewish faith on the back burner, okay? I'm very pro-Jewish, unlike my opponent. I'm actually Jewish myself.
UMV: Al...
VPOTUS: Well, half Jewish.
UMV: It's okay, Al. I've agreed to be on the ticket. There's no need for you to become Jewish, okay?
VPOTUS: Great! Great, Joe! And I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "Hey, does all this compromising make me look like some kind of smuck?" Well, let me tell you, it doesn't. You don't look like a smuck or a smuhleal or anything.
UMV: Schmuck.
VPOTUS: Beg pardon?
UMV: Nothing.
WIRELESS TRANSMISSION ENDS. 11:43 AM

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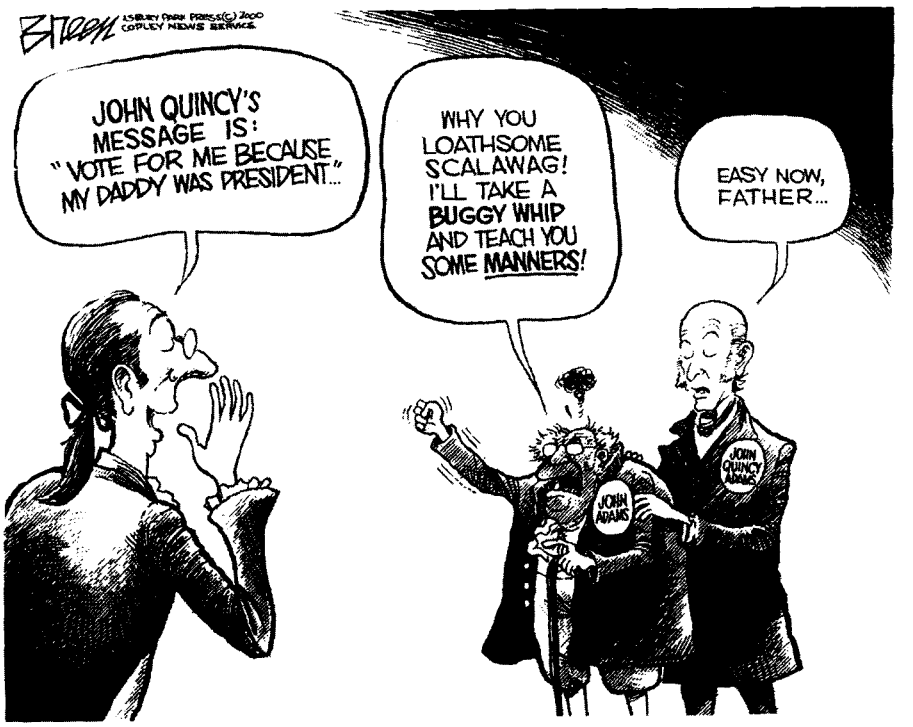
HELP!!!!


BLOOM
LIBERTY PRESS (C) 2000 COPLEY NEWS SERVICE
JOHN QUINCY'S MESSAGE IS: "VOTE FOR ME BECAUSE MY DADDY WAS PRESIDENT..."
WHY YOU LOATHSOME SCALAWAG! I'LL TAKE A BUGGY WHIP AND TEACH YOU SOME MANNERS!
EASY NOW, FATHER...
JOHN ADAMS
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

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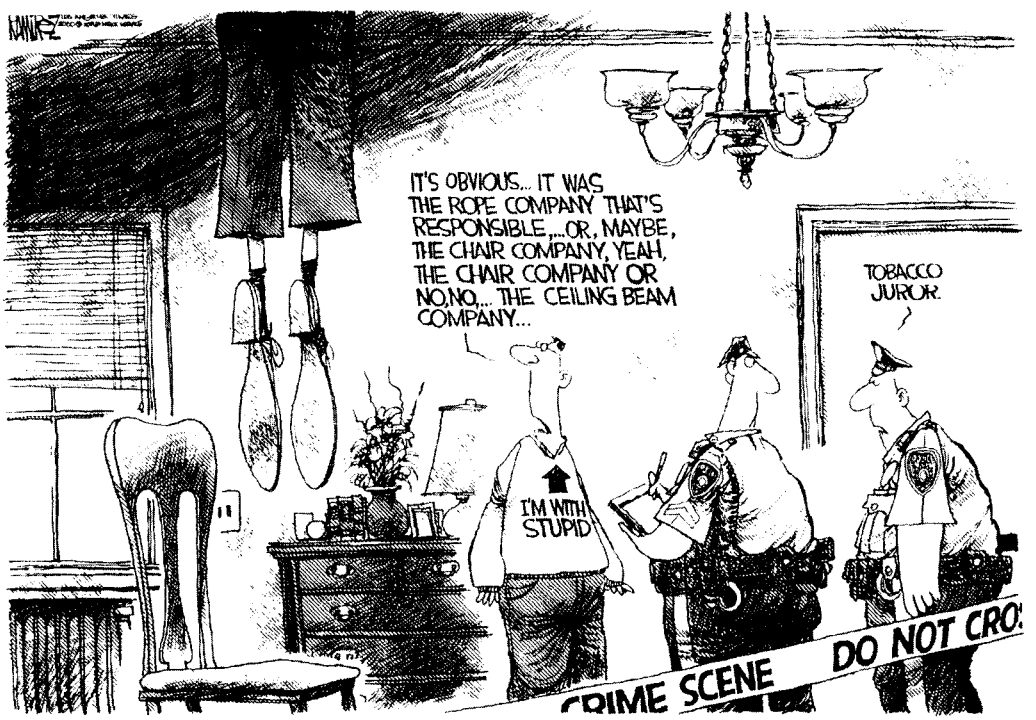
"In this country, son, any little boy can grow up to be president —unless, of course, some little girl grows up to stop him."

Anointing Saint Al

Like Caesar's wife, Joe Lieberman's
Above reproach, but can
Al's sins (some cardinal) go, poof!
By dabbing on some Ban?
Those doleful Buddhist bells still toll
Across the fruited plain,
While White House coffees cast a cloud
Above the amber grain.

—W. H. von Dreele


IT'S OBVIOUS... IT WAS THE ROPE COMPANY THAT'S RESPONSIBLE,...OR, MAYBE, THE CHAIR COMPANY, YEAH, THE CHAIR COMPANY OR NO,NO,... THE CEILING BEAM COMPANY...
TOBACCO JUROR
I'M WITH STUPID
CRIME SCENE DO NOT CRO

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Sense and Sensibility

DAMON LINKER

The Moral Obligation to Be Intelligent: Selected Essays, by Lionel Trilling, edited by Leon Wieseltier (Farrar, Straus, 576 pp., $35)

THE public intellectual has seen better days. Technical expertise abounds, and we certainly do not lack highly intelligent specialists on any number of subjects, from the human genome to the global economy. But when it comes to comprehensive reflection on the greatest literary and artistic productions of mankind, we appear to be living through a protracted period of mediocrity.

This, at any rate, is the conclusion one draws from reading Lionel Trilling's literary criticism. The books and essays he produced during the years he taught English literature at Columbia University (from 1931 until his death in 1975) provide nothing less than an education in the critical intellect. For all the useful insights found in the polemics of today's cultural critics, Trilling's writings easily outstrip them in taste, style, and sensibility. Along with the essays of Edmund Wilson and Irving Howe, they set a standard for American letters that we have yet to match.

But Trilling's work is also noteworthy for the crucial role it played in the intellectual history of 20th-century America. Trilling was among the first (and the few) of the New York intellectuals to distance himself from the Trotskyite socialism that came to dominate *Partisan Review* in the 1930s. By the time of his fictional dissection of the pieties of American Communism in *The Middle of the Journey* (1947), he had already developed the deep skepticism that would be displayed most impressively in *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), his greatest collection of essays. In disposition if not political convictions, Trilling was the first neoconservative.

Mr. Linker teaches political theory at Brigham Young University.

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Lionel Trilling, king of critics

For all of these reasons, we should consider ourselves indebted to Leon Wieseltier for rescuing the 32 essays collected in *The Moral Obligation to Be Intelligent* from the various out-of-print volumes in which they originally appeared. Thanks to his efforts, it is now possible to find in a single book some of Trilling's loveliest essays—on Wordsworth, James, Keats, Austen, Hemingway, and *Huckleberry Finn*. There are also fascinating thematic explorations of "T. S. Eliot's Politics," the Kinsey Report, "George Orwell and the Politics of Truth," and "Art, Will, and Necessity." Each is a model of essayistic elegance.

If there is any theme that connects these disparate topics, it is Western humanity's quest to come to terms with its modernity through literature and poetry, social science and critical reflection. But it would be wrong to reduce the subtle textures of Trilling's ideas to a single teaching. On the contrary, his greatness lies in his refusal to jump on any bandwagon or embrace any ideology unambiguously. The kind of intelligence to which we have a "moral obligation" to aspire is that which opens itself up to the remarkable diversity and complexity of modern experience. For Trilling, that experience can never be adequately captured in a theory or formula, much less a political program.

Rather, it shows itself in the productions of modern culture and in the exegeses of a critic like himself. Trilling sought to tell us who we are by examining what we do, think, feel, and say. Accordingly, his project was always more descriptive than prescriptive.

Yet Trilling was not entirely apolitical. In fact, as Wieseltier tells us in his thoughtful introduction, it was the half-hidden political dimension of Trilling's writings that convinced him they deserved to be reissued, and he offers them as a model of the sort of engaged criticism that he himself has tried to foster as literary editor of *The New Republic*. It is a criticism that (in Trilling's words) "has at heart the interests of liberalism" and seeks to further them not by "confirming . . . its sense of general rightness" but by putting its ideas and assumptions to the test. This deeply self-critical stance can, at least in theory, help liberalism resist its temptation to "simplify" the world. It thereby promises to "recall liberals to a sense of variousness and possibility" and reawaken their "awareness of [the] complexity and difficulty" of life. For Trilling, as for Wieseltier, the key to such a reformation is the thoughtful study of literature as "the human activity that takes fullest and most precise

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account" of the exigencies of human experience.

Take, for example, Trilling's treatment of *The Princess Casamassima* by Henry James. In James's portrayal of the allure and danger of the anarchist violence that prevailed among the proletarian reformers of 19th-century London, Trilling finds "an incomparable representation of the spiritual circumstances of our civilization." Drawn into radical politics after rejecting the bourgeois social life of her husband, the novel's title character is, for Trilling, "a perfect drunkard of reality"—someone who makes the typically modern mistake of treating reality as "a thing, a position, a finality, a bedrock" that can be reduced to a moral formula.

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Trilling sought to tell us who we are by examining what we do, think, feel, and say.

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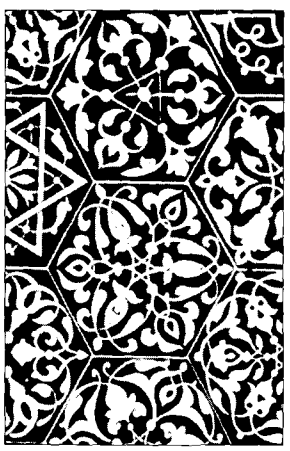
In her passionate quest to find evidence for "an absolute morality" in the world, the Princess shows herself to be "the very embodiment of the modern will which masks itself in virtue," all the while despising "the variety and modulations of the human story." She represents nothing other than "the political awareness that is not aware, the social consciousness which hates full consciousness, the moral earnestness which is moral luxury." In Trilling's hands, James's artistry becomes a source, not just of beauty, but of "social and political knowledge which is hard to come by" in any other way.



This urbane and literary liberalism is certainly a vast improvement on the stultifying, moralistic variety preached by academic theorists like John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin. Still, Trilling's radically critical approach to the social and political contours of the modern world is not without problems.

It is one thing to take note of complexity; it is quite another to treat this as an excuse to forego reflection on principles of moral and aesthetic judgment that transcend complexity. In consistently avoiding such reflection (and at times even treating it with suspicion), Trilling ended up in a position much like that of the late Isaiah Berlin, whose "pluralism" was forever on the verge of collapsing into easygoing relativism. Like Trilling, Berlin refused to acknowledge the higher good in whose light the recognition of complexity appears to be desirable. The result was a body of work that, for all its historical and literary élan, remained philosophically superficial.

Wieseltier's convictions notwithstanding, the last thing liberals need now in our "postmodern" age is a greater recognition of "contingency" and a deeper antipathy toward "totalizing philosophies." Opening ourselves up to complexity is no substitute for a thoughtful inquiry into first principles.

The danger of retreating into complexity is not that it will lead liberals to become unprincipled. It is rather that in doing so they will continue to adhere to their principles without ever noticing their presence, let alone subjecting them to rational scrutiny. If the smugness that too often characterizes liberalism today is any indication, liberals have become quite comfortable with the self-satisfaction that can accompany a fixation on contingencies.

To Trilling's credit, the essays he wrote after the cultural cataclysm of the Sixties show that he had begun to recognize the weakness of his position. In these writings—his rueful examination of the "Mind in the Modern World" is among the very best—one finds a quiet acknowledgment that liberalism's vulnerability to the countercultural onslaught demonstrated the need for deeper thinking about what it stood for and why. That Trilling never produced such an account may be simply a result of the fact that he died too soon to do so. But it may also indicate that even the greatest of the liberal intellectuals failed to rise to the level of a first-rate philosopher. **NR**

Easy Virtue

PETER BERKOWITZ

Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality, by Ronald Dworkin (Harvard University Press, 511 pp., $35)

EVEN his many critics recognize that Ronald Dworkin ranks among his generation's leading moral philosophers and constitutional scholars. Along with the work of John Rawls, Dworkin's prolific scholarly and journalistic writings have defined the intellectual agenda for academic liberals in law schools as well as philosophy and political-science departments for a quarter of a century. While he by no means speaks for all those who call themselves liberals, Dworkin, who holds professorships of law and jurisprudence at New York University and University College, London, certainly speaks for the dominant strand of academic liberalism, providing one of its most articulate and theoretically sophisticated voices.

Dworkin's liberalism is egalitarian, rights-based, procedural, and progressive. All American liberals affirm human equality, but Dworkin's liberalism declares it an imperative of justice that the state guarantee a substantial degree of social and economic equality through a generous welfare system, universal health care, and an aggressive affirmative-action program. All liberals invoke individual rights, but Dworkin's greatest concern is with those that protect the freedoms of speech, abortion, sexual choice, and a dignified death. All liberals emphasize the rule of law and impartial administration of justice, but Dworkin's philosophy demands that government remain neutral toward competing conceptions of the good life, especially those grounded in traditional religious faith.

Mr. Berkowitz teaches at George Mason University School of Law and is author most recently of *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*.

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And while it is an axiom for liberals that upholding the principles of freedom and equality promotes human progress, Dworkin's liberalism stands out for its resolute if unstated conviction that morality and law require a legislative agenda and a constitutional jurisprudence that, on virtually all important points, converge with the political program of the left wing of the Democratic party.

Sovereign Virtue is a collection of essays

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Now, as attention shifts to questions of character, Dworkin has wrapped himself in the mantle of virtue.

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written since 1981 in which Dworkin deepens his theoretical account of liberalism and expands on its practical imperatives for democracy in America.

His overarching purpose is to clarify the political implications of a morality that he calls "ethical individualism." This "critical morality"—which he sometimes speaks of as if it were identical with morality itself—is grounded in two "ideals" or "principles," which bear a certain family resemblance to the fundamental premise of the liberal tradition, the natural freedom and equality of all individuals. The first holds that "it is objectively important that any human life, once begun, succeed rather than fail—that the potential of that life be realized rather than wasted." The second insists that "one person—the person whose life it is—has a special responsibility for each life, and that in virtue of that special responsibility he or she has a right to make the fundamental decisions that define, for him, what a successful life would be."

The first thing to notice about Dworkin's principles—especially given his insistence on their implications for law and public policy—is their indeterminacy, just how much room they leave for competing moral and political interpretations. The success of each human life may be "equally objectively important," but to whom? In the eyes of God? In our hearts? According to a universal law? What is the individual's responsibility or duty in securing the success of other lives? What is the government's responsibility, and to what extent does it turn on questions about the government's capabilities and impact? In what does human success consist? Wealth? Honor? Virtue? Salvation? What counts as a "fundamental decision"?

The second thing to notice is the tension between the two principles. If it is objectively important that each life succeed rather than fail, aren't there likely to be occasions in which the objective failure of some requires others to compel them to choose better? This need for intervention is implied by the intimation Dworkin incorporates into the first principle that we all have a general responsibility to help others succeed. But this conflicts with the "special responsibility" invoked in the second principle of each individual to make his own "fundamental decisions."

Leif Carlsson

Ronald Dworkin

The third thing to notice is the discreet non sequitur embodied in Dworkin's principle of "special responsibility." It does not follow from this notion that we have a "right" to make "fundamental decisions." Perhaps we are the stewards of our lives, in need of instruction and stringent laws to help us meet our special responsibilities. The police have a special responsibility to enforce the law, but they are bound by the laws they enforce and must also answer to their superiors.

Dworkin wants to have his cake and eat it too: He wants both a far-reaching egalitarianism and wide-ranging individual freedom. His first principle asserts the existence of an objective moral order that imposes a general responsibility for redistributing wealth so as to bring about "equality of resources," while the second declares the impermissibility of restricting the individual's freedom to decide what a good life consists in.

Something has to give. The redistribution of resources necessarily involves a substantial restriction on the freedom of some. And the freedom to define and live a good life must, given the unequal distribution of strength, charm, beauty, intelligence, and fortune, lead to striking inequalities of societal honor, wealth, and power.

Nor can one approve of Dworkin's rhetorical ploys—for example, the selective appeal to the issue of scholarly bias. In considering the Supreme Court's support for laws banning assisted suicide—a holding he prominently opposed—Dworkin acknowledges concerns that the ill and elderly may be coaxed into choosing death by relatives or hospital officials while casting doubt on the studies that raise them: "Many of the social scientists who have compiled the relevant evidence have strong ethical opinions, including religious convictions or convictions about proper medical ethics, that might impair their scientific independence." Perhaps. Yet in a long chapter defending affirmative action, Dworkin relies almost exclusively on *The Shape of the River*, a book on its empirical effects by Derek Bok and William G. Bowen—as presidents of Harvard and Princeton, the architects of the very programs whose merits they assess.

Dworkin also stacks the deck via tendentious labeling. Two parties, he argues, have been battling it out on the Supreme Court over which rights the Constitution protects. The "party of history"—the conservatives—contends that it protects only those basic liberties that are, in the words of Justice White, "deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition." The "party of integrity"—Dworkin's party—holds that the Court's task is to identify the general moral principles that underlie existing constitutional rights and to derive from them new rights for changing circumstances. No doubt Dworkin has put his finger on an important difference between the two camps. But it is invidious

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to build partisan moral judgments into the very names that he assigns.

A third ploy is the appropriation of opponents' terminology. In the mid 1980s, natural-law theory—thanks in particular to Dworkin's colleague John Finnis—began to enjoy something of a comeback in academic circles. Dworkin published an article maintaining that his theory of constitutional interpretation, according to which it is a judge's task to formulate a holding that makes the best sense of the nation's constitutional history, is a form of "naturalism" and a respectable version of natural law. Never mind that nature in the natural-law tradition implies a standard opposed to convention, a standard that stands apart from and superior to history. Then in the mid 1990s, as religion began to occupy a more prominent place in American politics, Dworkin sought in *Life's Dominion* to find a ground for the right to abortion in the First Amendment's guarantee of religious liberty. He argued that opinions about the status of a fetus imply opinions about the ultimate meaning of life, and that it is just such opinions that religious liberty was meant to protect. No matter that in the view Dworkin proposed, religion has nothing special to do with duty, faith, or God.

Now, as attention both public and scholarly shifts to questions of character, Dworkin has wrapped himself in the mantle of virtue. "Equal concern for the fate of all those citizens over whom it claims dominion and from whom it claims allegiance," Dworkin asserts at the beginning of his book, "is the sovereign virtue of political community." It is a peculiar sort of interest in virtue, however, that sees it only as an attribute of institutions and not also of individuals. And it is a shortsighted concern for equality that neglects the shadow vices—envy, conformism, and sluggishness—that imperil democracy and liberty.

Ronald Dworkin is a powerful and persuasive advocate of the view that law and politics do indeed at crucial junctures depend on moral philosophy's services. At the same time, exposing the subtle maneuvers and clever obfuscations he employs to advance his particular derivation of law and public policy from morality provides a powerful reminder that we have good reason to limit our dependence on philosophers. **NR**

Song of Himself

JOYCE HACKETT

Experience, by Martin Amis
(Talk/Hyperion, 406 pp., $23.95)

YOU have to wonder about a country where anybody's dental implants make national news. If a British empire still exists on which the sun has yet to set, it is the island's navel-gazing press. London still prints three times the number of dailies as New York, and *that* culture's crown prince is Martin Amis. The much-scrutinized son and heir apparent of comic author Kingsley Amis, Martin went on to become a biting postmodern novelist—with books like *The Rachel Papers*, *Money*, and *London Fields*—and the feared chief critic of the *Sunday Times*. He also became a favorite whipping boy of the tabloid press, which lambasted him for leaving his agent (and best friend's wife) for one who made him more money, and for replacing his wife (and rotting teeth) with newer American models. Some called him the nastiest man in England, some the funniest, but Amis's reputation increased regardless, even when, behind his novels' glittering technique, there seemed to be no *there* there.

Now Amis has written a memoir about growing up in the spotlight. The book's center, and the genesis of Martin's own fame, is his father. Not surprisingly, when Kingsley comes on stage, the book lights up. Savagely funny, wildly dysfunctional, he is more complex a character than either father or son has written. A compulsive philanderer who once took his first wife, Hilly, to lunch at the home of his married mistress and then made a date with a third woman there, he nevertheless inspired such devotion that Hilly nursed him in his last years as he collapsed from drink. There are charming windows onto how the literati/glitterati live, as when, after Kingsley has been knighted, Martin's sons greet him at the door, dressed in breastplates and Viking horns; Kingsley, by now obese and nearly immobile, lowers himself onto one knee for the "real" ceremony.

Amis captures his father's pettiness and phobias, his searing intelligence and wit, his chaste erotic dreams about Corky (his pet name for Queen Elizabeth). Kingsley's comment that he "couldn't get on" with Martin's second novel was long cited in the press as evidence of Oedipal rivalry, but what Kingsley seems to have bequeathed him, more than anything, was the right to play in the big leagues. Watching them critique each other's work, honestly and fairly, without tearing the resilient fabric of their affection, seems an extraordinary lesson in how to love big and in public.

But if the stated purpose of this kaleidoscopic memoir is the intimate desire to pay tribute to a loved one, what unites the fragments and footnotes that clutter it is Amis's obsession with fame. Though he goes on at length about his cousin, Lucy Partington, the victim of a particularly gruesome murder, his feelings for her lie dead on the page; those who compel the author's energy, admiration, adversarialism, and awe are those he can box with in the public ring. His asides to the un-famous, especially the women in his life, fall utterly flat. Mother, sister, aunt, wife, cousin, and girlfriend are all addressed as "you," leading the reader to wonder if in Amis's mind they blend together in a sort of ur-frau. Amis praises his wife, author Isabel Fonseca, for belly dancing in her robe with his dental prosthesis in her mouth, the night after his teeth were extracted (but then must note that she took them both off). A self-justifying letter to his aunt responds to her reluctance to see her murdered daughter "memorialized" in print. Amis's sister Sally receives hardly a mention until their father is dying, when Amis, now of the six-figure advances, goes to her apartment and remarks—twice—how small it is. The day Kingsley dies, though Sally has been attending him for ten hours, Martin and his brother have a leisurely smoke in front of the hospital before going up. Then Amis writes, "He has finished his work and you [Sally] have finished yours."

Ms. Hackett is author of the novel *Disturbance of the Inner Ear*, to be published next year by Harcourt.

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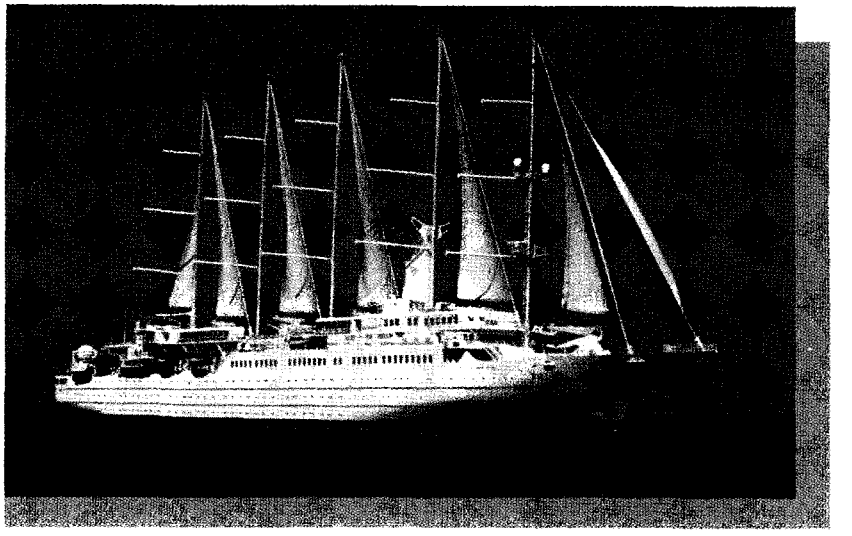

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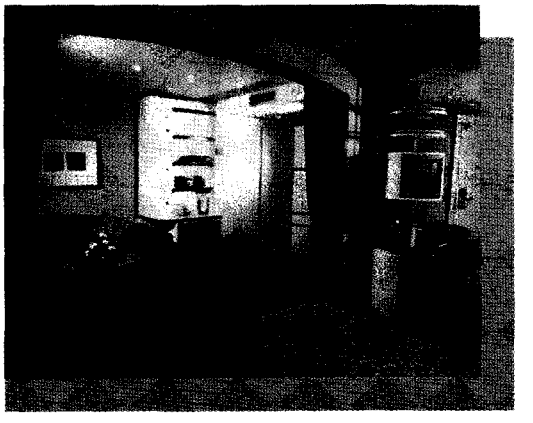

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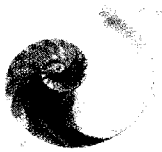

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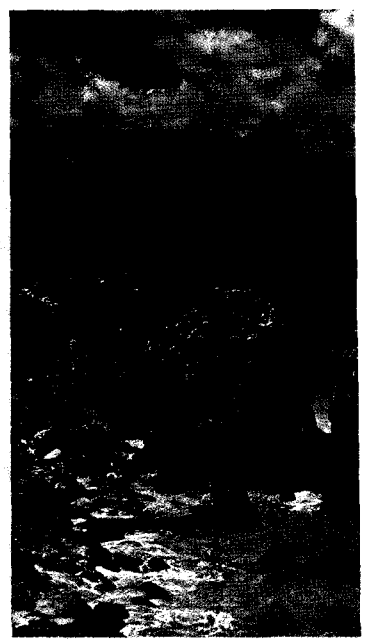

ST BARTHÉLEMY, LEEWARD ISLANDS. Tiny "St Barts" has long been the haunt of the very rich who come for privacy, gorgeous beaches, and exquisite French cuisine. Travel down hilly narrow roads in open-air Jeeps or "mini-mokes." In Gustavia, quaint streets lead past small markets and bakeries—and dozens of small shops selling French perfumes, sportswear, watches, and crystal.

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ILES DES SAINTES, LESSER ANTILLES. Pastoral and far off the beaten track, the Saintes are a cluster of eight islands off the southern coast of Guadeloupe. In Bourg, the charming hamlet on Terre-de-Haut, the largest island, you can wander peaceful streets past small houses, then follow the narrow road out of town through fields and hills to a sweeping strand of secluded beaches.

NEVIS, LEEWARD ISLANDS. Nevis is an almost-perfect volcanic cone rising up from the sea and covered with bougainvillea, hibiscus, and many other lush tropical plants. For a time we'll be anchoring outside of Charlestown, the island's capital, for those who wish to go ashore on tours or on their own, then repositioning to a nearby idyllic beach for an afternoon of watersports, sunning, and a festive beach barbecue.

PIGEON ISLAND, ST. LUCIA, WINDWARD ISLANDS. The Pitons, two volcanic peaks rising to more than 2,400 feet, mark St. Lucia, an island of lush green valleys, banana plantations, and bubbling sulfur springs. Some 24 miles of vibrant reef make it a haven for divers and snorkelers. Pigeon Island National Park, connected to the mainland by a causeway, was once a pirates' hideaway. Today, impressive ruins of old English forts, archaeological relics of Arawak Indians, and splendid beaches make this a fascinating place to explore.

ST MARTIN, DUTCH ANTILLES. St Martin, the "French" side of this beautiful island (the "Sint Maarten" half is Dutch) of white-sand beaches (there are over 10 miles of them!), features the *chic* capital city, Marigot, of shops, bistros, and *ooo-la-la* charming cafés. Cross the Dutch border and head for lively Philipsburg, where you will find gingerbread West Indian buildings that house excellent duty-free shops.

Exciting, Exclusive Itinerary

DATE	PORT/TIMES	EXCLUSIVE *NR* EVENTS
Dec. 10 (Sun.)	Bridgetown, Barbados	Evening Welcome Reception
Dec. 11 (Mon.)	At Sea	Morning & Afternoon Seminars, Cocktail Reception (pre-dinner)
Dec. 12 (Tue.)	Nevis, 8AM–6PM	Late-night smoker (post-dinner)
Dec. 13 (Wed.)	St Martin, 8AM–1AM	Morning Seminar
Dec. 14 (Thu.)	St Barthélemy, 8AM–6PM	Morning Seminar
Dec. 15 (Fri.)	Iles des Saintes, 8AM–5PM	Afternoon Seminar, Late-night smoker (post-dinner)
Dec. 16 (Sat.)	Pigeon Island, 7AM–2PM	Afternoon Seminar, Cocktail Reception (pre-dinner)
Dec. 17 (Sun.)	Bridgetown, 6AM arrival	

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☐ Book my air from _____ (see list below).

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

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If No, indicate citizenship _____

Special Information (medical conditions, celebrating anniversary, etc.)

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Chicago	$860	Los Angeles	$930	Phoenix**	$1,070	Tampa	$760
Cincinnati	$990	Miami	$660	Pittsburgh	$900	Tucson	$1,060
Cleveland	$920	Minneapolis	$1,070	Portland**	$1,070	Washington, DC (DCA or IAD)	$780
Dallas	$900	New Orleans	$800	Salt Lake City**	$1,050		
Denver	$980	New York	$830	San Diego**	$1,040		

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Amis shines as a critic, and his asides are jewels. The book is chock-full of sparkling opinions about the writers Amis knows, and his vignettes often delightfully capture the idiosyncrasies of bigwig literati. But where men are quoted, analyzed, dissected, and sparred with, women enter Amis's consciousness only insofar as they nurture men. The female contemporaries Amis notices are those who write essays about the Amises.

Meanwhile, Amis goes to Herculean lengths to establish his own greatness. Literary talent, he boldly declares, is inherited. He lavishly heaps self-deprecation on his own adolescent buffoonery; but when dealing with issues of adult character, like his overarching ambition, irony shades into grandiosity. The author attributes any ill treatment he has received in the press to envy. Referring to a joke from his novel *Money* that we will presumably feel compelled to look up, Amis cites page and line from three different editions. His Brobdignagian confidence in the significance of his own juvenilia prompts him to footnote the library where his adolescent correspondence resides. One senses he is only half kidding when he comically details his dental travails in order to place himself in the company of Nabokov and Joyce, both of whom also suffered from bad teeth. Presumably this elaborate account is a response to the British press, which unjustly crucified him for his vanity; yet Amis presents the process as a tragedy of Greek dimension, without relating it to decades of chain smoking and abysmal dental hygiene. Rather than pathos, the harrowing description inspired, at least in this reviewer, a renewed interest in floss.

The model for this sort of fractured, circular memoir is Gertrude Stein's modernist masterpiece, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. In this lively, shapely, eminently readable book, the work that made Stein a household name, she too asserted her genius via a portrait of a loved one. Writing in the voice of her lover Alice, Stein trumpets her own accomplishments while poking fun at the way all narrators aggrandize themselves while pretending not to. And Stein's generous wit made human beings of Picasso, Braque, and Hemingway while taking pains to praise the genius of her maid. By contrast, Amis is content to affirm his own greatness, rather than invent a work that might inspire such a judgment.

Amis's portrait of a complex father-son relationship lit by floodlights is solidly real and well worth reading. But overall, reading *Experience* is like watching a one-man remake of *Upstairs, Downstairs*: Upstairs are his entertaining conversations with great literary figures like his mentor Saul Bellow and author Salman Rushdie; downstairs, he wallows in self-pitying reminiscences about his murdered cousin and rebuts some slight from an obscure British tabloid. Suffice it to say that readers not mentioned by name in the book may have some trouble following the byplay. It is a shame that Amis failed to fix his intelligence on the real subject of *Experience*—not his own celebrity but the way that fame puffs up, withers, and mangles its fortunate victims. **NR**

Down for the Count

BRIAN BURRELL

The Advent of the Algorithm: The Idea That Rules the World, by David Berlinski (Harcourt, 345 pp., $28)

On the copyright page of David Berlinski's new book, an inconspicuous disclaimer informs the reader that while this is a work of scholarship, "the author has woven stories, involving imagined people and incidents, into the text, the better to enable the reader to enjoy the technical discussions. Or to endure them."

This choice turns out to be an expensive gamble. By the time the author gets around to introducing the German logician Gottlob Frege on page 48, the import of that unobtrusive warning has become all too clear. Describing Frege's homeland as "a countryside of dark and gloomy forests, hags and elves and goblins and toadish-looking men behind the somber trees," the author adds, "at night . . . hunchbacks gather in darkened glens to play the clarinet." The reader, it seems, is in for a dark and stormy night.

In trying to breathe life into the dry and dusty world of 20th-century logic, Berlinski has set himself a daunting task. His subject is the algorithm, a set of instructions that accomplishes a task by breaking it into a series of small steps. Most of us know algorithms as the plug-and-chug procedures drilled into us in school—long division, for example, or finding the lowest common denominator of two fractions. But in the world of math this is just the beginning, a small taste of what algorithms, and thus machines, can do. The student who grumbles that a computer can do a better and faster job of finding the square root of 2 to ten decimal places is right, but the intriguing question is, How do you go about creating that machine and instructing it to do the job? As students today depend more and more on hand-held calculators, they also unwittingly come to rely on the work of several generations of mathematicians and logicians who laid the groundwork for the computer age by exploring what can and cannot be done using an algorithm. This is the story Berlinski sets out to tell, and it is a story well worth hearing. Its heroes—Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Kurt Gödel, Alan Turing, Alonzo Church, and Emil Post—deserve the praise that Berlinski heaps on them.

It was Frege who developed the predicate calculus, an early version of the new math, whose significance was lost on his contemporaries. What Berlinski eventually gets around to explaining is how the very practical concept of a computer-programming language owes its existence to the seemingly abstract systems of symbols and rules painstakingly explored by Frege, then Russell—and especially Gödel.

But instead of letting the story unfold in a series of small steps, Berlinski has opted for a patchwork of dashed-off portraits, personal reminiscences, and flights of fancy. In fact, it is his own inventions, rather than the necessary technical discussions, that prove unendurable. Berlinski writes in flashes of active imagery—history lurches, ideas

Mr. Burrell teaches mathematics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is the author of *Merriam-Webster's Guide to Everyday Math*.

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jump out of dark alleys, and theorems blink, grimace, and wave hello or goodbye. He populates his tale with goblins, ghosts, cardinals, rabbis, dream merchants, and Nazis. Then there is the sex, which, needless to say, does not shed much light on the subject at hand.

A logician, professor, novelist, and accomplished writer, Berlinski revels in riffs, employing a jazzy style. When he is good, he is very good, as when he bravely launches into the best explanation of Gödel's difficult incompleteness theorem to be found in a popular work. But when he is bad, as when he improvises a conversation with his editor and agent in order to explain how DNA replicates, the results are embarrassing. Berlinski is much more appealing when he sticks to the clinical details of theory and proof.

Ultimately, the failure of this book lies in Berlinski's decision to rely on style over substance. He is addicted to wet imagery, reaching for a moist qualifier whenever possible, preferring a splat to a thud. His penchant for the pretentious (including an addiction to alliteration), his obsession with pet phrases and obscure words, and in particular his overuse of the word "palpable" and its variants, quickly become a distraction. In one excruciating sentence he manages to conjoin all these sins when he writes: "Chiliastic physics, it would seem, has entered the same depressing defile inhabited for so long by the Darwinian theory of evolution, the two theories palpating one another's padded shoulders and exchanging damp handshakes down there in the dark."

Berlinski would be well advised to keep the novelist at bay when writing about mathematics. When he does, as in his previous *A Tour of the Calculus*, the result is the bringing to life of a difficult and sometimes frustrating subject. In his latest work, he wrestles every one of Strunk and White's elements of style into submission. Reading the book brings to mind the famous essay in which Mark Twain vets a single page of Fenimore Cooper, finding 114 out of 115 possible literary offenses. If nothing else, the mathematically inclined can approach *The Advent of the Algorithm* with a similar expectation of the dubious pleasures of counting. **NR**

Woman of Ill Repute

SOL W. SANDERS

Becoming Madame Mao, by Anchee Min (Houghton Mifflin, 338 pp., $25)

ANCHEE MIN'S *Becoming Madame Mao*, a biography in the form of a novel, is at least the third English-language attempt to present Mao Tse-tung's fourth wife as a tragic figure. Ross Terrill, in *Madame Mao: The White-Boned Demon*, did the most digging; but Maoist sympathies prevented him from seeing the Communist interregnum for the total catastrophe it is. Roxane Witke's *Comrade Chiang Ch'ing* was written on the basis of long personal interviews, the only ones ever given to a foreigner, at the height of Mme. Mao's power; but the book betrays the twists and turns of a semi-authorized tract as well as a feminist spin which nevertheless still pictures her and Mao as a romantic couple.

Mme. Mao was neither heroic in the old Greek sense, laudable and worthy of emulation, nor representative of an important sociological group. Chiang Ching—one of several names she adopted in various incarnations—is merely another of those mysteries of the human comedy: a rather unremarkable person who through happenstance and insatiable ambition rose to a position of enormous power.

Because her history has so often been fabricated and refabricated—both for her own purposes and in the interests of the Communist party—much of it will always be in doubt. Still, the outline is clear, and is rehashed in Min's book. Born just after the Chinese Revolution began in 1911, a waif from a broken family in Shantung, Confucius's home province, she joined a students' itinerant opera company dedicated to spreading a message of reform. Eventually, she made her way to Shanghai, center of China's cinema, where she played minor roles, peddling her attractive body if not her art, a mediocre actress seemingly without a future.

In 1937, when the Japanese in Shanghai started their all-out attempt to bring down Chiang Kai-shek's Republic, already besieged by warlords and Communists, Chiang Ching made her way to the Communist guerrillas' isolated redoubt in northwest China. Possibly recruited for the purpose by a fellow Shantung-man, Kang Sheng—Mao's longtime secret-police chief and head pimp—she was in and out of Mao's bed, eventually becoming his wife over the objections of his Politburo comrades. Mao was then still only first among equals, and there was bitter resentment that he was abandoning his third wife, a veteran who had accompanied the Communists on their Long March. Both Mao and Chiang Ching had to sign a pledge that she would never enter politics.

But her own ambition, and Mao's never-ending game of playing all ends against the middle, made her a useful tool, and she soon took a role in the incessant intrigues around Mao when the Communist regime was installed in Beijing in 1949. By the 1960s, when Mao was fighting to retain his role as supreme leader and to keep China from becoming a "normal" society, Chiang Ching became his chief agent provocateur.

And what a demon she was! Leading the juvenile-delinquent Red Guards along with her acolytes in the "cultural" world, she brought China to virtual chaos as Mao lay dying (at least in part from long-untreated syphilis). Chiang Ching believed this was her moment to become China's empress, but on Mao's death the forces of "moderation" led by the old mandarin/compromiser/impresario Chou En-lai and his sidekick, Deng Hsiao-ping, closed in on her. The new leadership staged a show trial including evidence that she had informed in her Shanghai days when she was a prisoner of the Kuomintang political police. But Chiang Ching gave tit for tat: "I was Mao's dog; I bit whom he told me to bite." Condemned by the new "Maoists," discredited even among her followers (Anchee Min was one), she was said, finally, to have committed suicide.

Mr. Sanders, a longtime news correspondent in Asia, is writing a biography of Mme. Chiang Kai-shek.

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That Chiang Ching and the rest of the so-called Gang of Four were scapegoats for one of the major man-made catastrophes of all time—at least 50 million people died as a result of the dislocations and famine brought on by Mao's Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution—is undoubtedly true. Still, this was a woman who used her power to even petty scores with old rivals, who was directly responsible for the death of thousands and the ruin of hundreds of thousands, and who justified it all with Mao's pseudo-Marxist rationalizations. Not once, as she apparently admitted to sometime intimates like Witke, did she even try to find out what happened to her own self-sacrificing mother. Nor did she take up the cause of China's abused women, as her admirers in the West have sometimes claimed. (Women's welfare was, indeed, the life's work of Teng Ying-chao, Chou's wife, and a Chiang Ching target.)

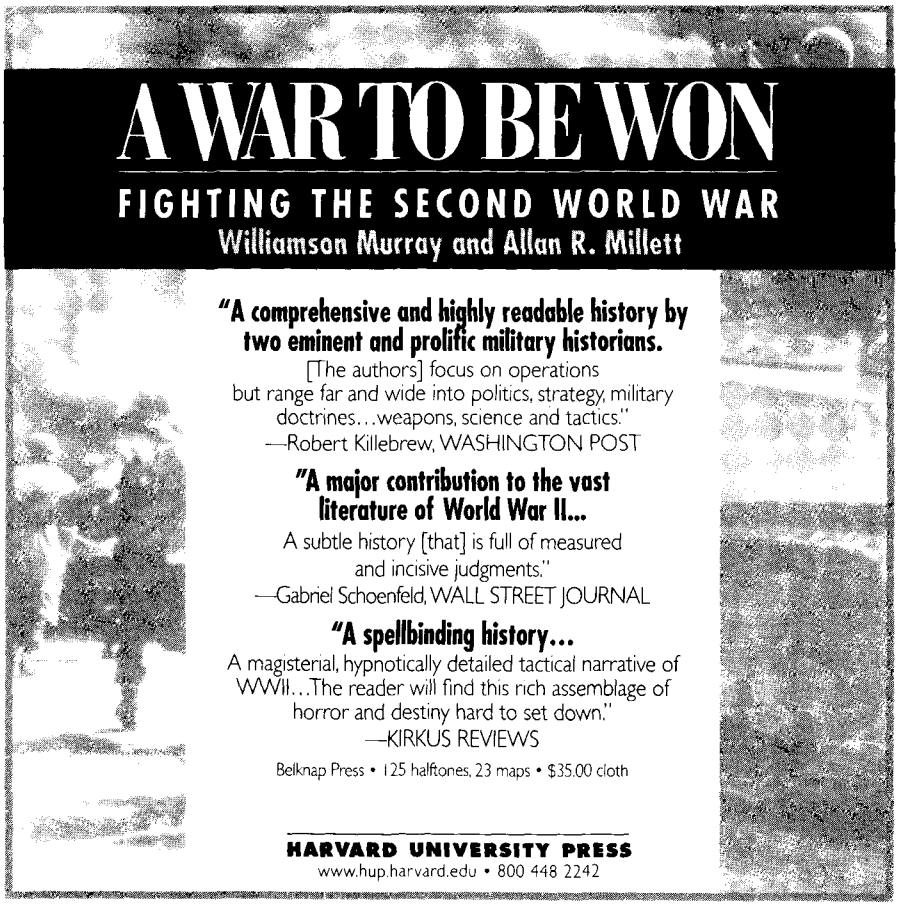
Perhaps this utter depravity is worthy of historical note, but Anchee Min approaches the story not as a historian but as a decidedly sympathetic novelist. Min herself, if the stylized photograph on the dust jacket is to be believed, is still a beautiful, young-looking Chinese woman. Born of an upper-middle-class family, she was intoxicated as a student activist by the later stages of the Cultural Revolution and became a devoted follower of Mme. Mao. But like so many others, she apparently got caught in the toils of the changing Party line and spent eight years on a prison farm, "sent down" to be "reeducated by the masses." She is now married to a former American Marine and has made a splash with several novels that include events based on her own miseries. She feels, apparently, that she has a special insight into Chiang Ching's personality and still, apparently, admires Mme. Mao's enormous energy and rebelliousness. Accordingly, she presents a sympathetic though cluttered narrative of the whole history of Chiang Ching's life, from her childhood to her final trial. In a radio interview, Min admitted that her own long-suffering mother still does not understand why Min is giving new publicity to the Chiang Ching story, which her mother, along with most of China, would like to forget.

Instead of an insightful presentation of recent Chinese history, we have in *Becoming Madame Mao* one more attempt to obscure the Asian scene by an appeal to the cliché of the exotic and unknowable East. But a whore's a whore for a' that!

Stylistically, the book is a mess. We have not only Chiang Ching's stream of consciousness, but also that of other friends and foes—and a third-person narrative as well. The strange staccato sentences are so primitive that at times they seem like baby talk or pidgin. Min might say that she is getting into the morass of Chiang Ching's mind, or delving into the psyche of the other players. But this does not excuse her many factual and translational mistakes. An apparatchik in the National People's Congress is not the equivalent of "a congressman." Her two-paragraph summary of the Chinese civil war of 1945–49 gives no indication that much of it was played out in the banks of Shanghai by warlords, with whole divisions switching sides with hardly a shot fired. Chiang Kai-shek's German military advisers, who dated from the Weimar Republic, were Junker anti-Nazis; Chiang was not a "fascist" who went to Hitler for help, as Min says. She glosses over Mao's ups and downs with rivals, his problems with the Moscow party line, the differences between sophisticated Shanghai party members like Chou and many of the country bumpkins around Mao. She presents a picture of the guerrillas as intellectual Marxists, when Chinese translations of Marxist and Communist books were not available until after Mao came to power.

The author does make the puzzling and painful point that while Chiang Ching seems to have been buried in her own cesspool, Mao, a far greater villain, has become an icon for many Chinese. I, too, was shocked when I saw Mao's face on an amulet tied to the rearview mirror of a taxi in Shenzen.

Min, in a recent radio interview, told an admiring caller about to go off to China for the first time that she should not trust anyone or anything she saw there, given the moral vacuum left by the Cultural Revolution. It is not bad advice for her readers. **NR**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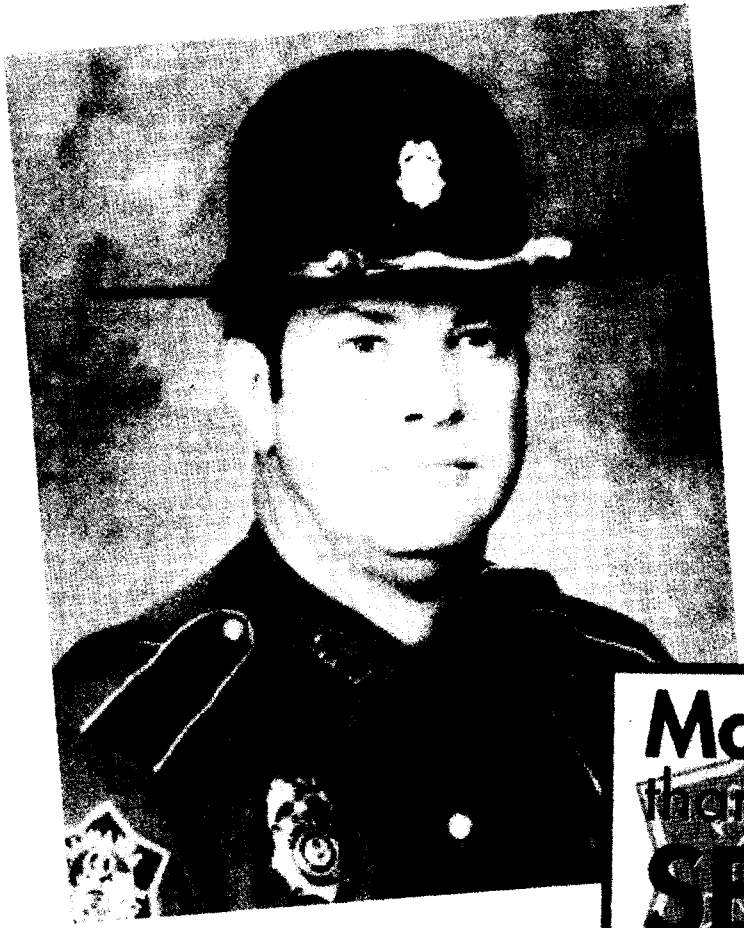

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■ CITY DESK ■

The Happy Troglodyte

RICHARD BROOKHISER

AMERICANS, the historian John Lukacs likes to say, are avaricious of time, prodigal of space. New Yorkers are avaricious of both. Manhattan is like a twelve-mile-long aircraft carrier, its men and machines stowed with a geometer's art. When gas prices were rising early this summer, it was hard for New Yorkers to sympathize, since so much here is, of necessity, within walking distance.

My apartment building is a convenient benchmark. Within the radius of only a few blocks, I have at hand things most Americans have to drive, sometimes miles, to find. This is true even though large chunks of my immediate neighborhood are taken up by big public buildings without leasable space—a high school, a welfare office, and the Babylonian headquarters of the local utility.

Within a one-block radius, there is: a supermarket; a pizza parlor (pretty good); a Chinese restaurant (suburban quality—i.e., pretty bad); a wallet-sized wine bar; a shoemaker who also fixes watches and copies keys; two laundries, one with coin-operated machines, one a traditional Chinese hand laundry (the sign in the window shows a youth bent under a sack of dirty clothes, and a dapper gent, who looks like Tom Dewey, telling him that he has come to the right place; fortunately the picture is no older than it is—if the youth wore a coolie's queue, the cops would seize it); one private preschool; one store for vitamins, herbs, and other quack medicines; two coffee houses; and two places of worship (Greek Orthodox and Rosicrucian).

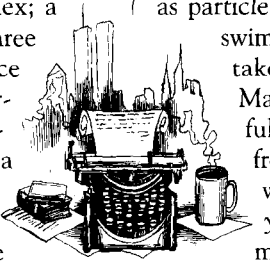
Within a two-block radius, it already becomes tedious to list the bars and restaurants. In addition, there is: a 24-hour deli (looks slightly sinister, and I doubt the shelf dates, but at three in the morning, it's a seller's market); a private mailbox service; a liquor store; a newsstand; a video rental; a bank; a fish and meat market; a drug store; a second shoemaker, the one I patronize; a charming little hotel that serves high tea, which fashion models patronize; a hall for rock concerts; two exercise salons; two more places of worship (Episcopal and Quaker).

■

New Yorkers abandoned the dream of the yeoman farmer, just as Satan turned his back on Heaven.

■

Expand the radius to three blocks, and now we start rocking: a subway station; a hospital; a multiplex; a farmers' market; two parks; three theaters. A very little distance further, but still within a quarter of a mile, is a book superstore, a sporting-goods store, a police academy, and two private clubs.

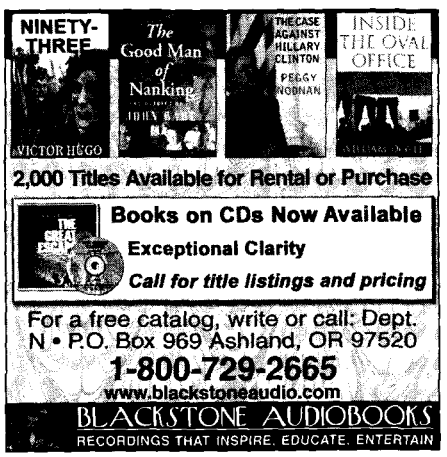


All this is not counting the places nobody goes to. Recently, across the street there opened a mysterious store filled with Chinese curios—philosopher's rocks, screens carved with dragon heads, apothecaries' chests with dozens of small drawers. It describes itself as a branch of a store in deepest Chinatown. Perhaps it is yet another laundry (for money). I also pass daily a storefront reader of palms and tarot cards, and an inconspicuous stairway leading to a—what exactly? a school? a theater?—where preoperative transsexuals practice acting like women. I cannot recommend either establishment. But do you want fresh vegetables trucked in from the upper Hudson Valley? A copy of Lucretius? A flask of Wild Irish Rose? The *Book of Common Prayer*? It's all a stroll away.

Why then doesn't everyone in America move here? They couldn't, since there are no affordable apartments. But they don't want to, in part because of the things New Yorkers can't easily get to.

Auto dealerships barely exist in Manhattan—there is a strip of them, including a Rolls Royce dealership, on the far west side in midtown. Gas stations are found in equally out-of-the-way places. Like the dealerships, they seem small, cramped, and old. The one closest to my neighborhood sat rusting and vacant for many years, until it was turned into a restaurant. The origins of baseball are not as rustic as its rhapsodes make them; in fact, the earliest teams were from New York. But try to find a diamond here now, outside of Central Park. Want to shoot some hoops? There are clusters of courts here and there, but you have to play with guys built like welterweight champions, who perfected their layups at Rikers Island. Up for a little barbecue? Only on the day of the Puerto Rican Day Parade, and then only if you don't mind being distracted by drunken rapists. Health clubs boast of their pools, but they are all as enclosed as particle accelerators. If you want to swim in the sun, it can be easier to take a train to Jones Beach. Manhattan's parks are wonderful, and they have come back from years of neglect. But if you want *your* trees, *your* flowers, *your* grass, you have to be a millionaire with a sky terrace or the rank interior courtyard of a block of brownstones.

New York stands outside one of the great American dreams—the dream of the yeoman farmer, out of Virgil via Jefferson. (Maybe the dream is even older—the architecture critic Vincent Scully compared the suburban house, car, and trailer to the Indian teepee, horse, and sledge.) New Yorkers abandon the dream, as Satan turned his back on Heaven. But our psyches are patriots still; when the atavistic urges come over us, we must drive to Long Island, New England, or upstate. So we care about gas prices after all. **NR**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■ FILM ■

Double Dealing

JOHN SIMON

I HAVE not been a great admirer of the films of Britain's Mike Hodges, whose Get *Carter* is considered a masterpiece of the noir genre. Some of them, like *Damien: Omen II* and *Flash Gordon*, I bypassed. The original *Omen* was bad enough to make a sequel counterindicated, and films made from comic strips, though hugely popular, strike me as slumming. I also avoided *Morons from Outer Space*; we have enough homegrown ones.

So I am late getting around to ***Croupier***, Hodges's very interesting latest, with a screenplay by Paul Mayersberg. This is the story of Jack Manfred, a writer struggling with his first novel, whose father helps him get a job as a croupier at London's Golden Lion Casino, the kind of work Jack once did in his native South Africa. Jack is uneager, but needs the money; besides, the job might yield material for his novel.

The film, indeed, shows him as both Jack, the real-life croupier, and Jake, the croupier-hero of his novel, which, eventually published anonymously, becomes a bestseller. Jack also acts as narrator of the movie, sometimes briefly editorializing in the middle of an action sequence, which produces a kind of Brechtian distanciation.

It is hard to write about this somewhat contrived and ultimately opaque film, which nevertheless leaches into one's brain. It is full of wiggly twists like an earthworm, but can also uncoil and strike like a cobra. Though it looks like a mere action flick, a commercial thriller, it is more than that. It is a thinking-man's genre film: not *King Lear* downsized into a comic strip, but a cartoon upgraded to the neighborhood of *Lear*.

Jack himself, as played by Clive Owen, has a sullen, phlegmatic, morally passionless quality that makes the dealer's cold-blooded superiority to the anxious punters (British for gamblers) appear smug, almost inhuman. Owen looks inauspiciously like Nicolas Cage, but is auspiciously a more complex actor. So he becomes subtly different in his relationships with three diverse women. Marion (Gina McKee) is a department-store detective and Jack's steady mistress aiming at marriage; she reflects his ideal self. Jani de Villiers (Alex Kingston) is a glamorous mystery woman and experienced punter; she represents Jack's temptation to do the unthinkable for a croupier—gamble, and crookedly at that—and instigates what may be his downfall. Bella (Kate Hardie), ex-prostitute and failed fellow croupier, stands for ambiguous reality, the mixed bag with which most of us must learn to make do.

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Not since Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket* has a film so reveled in manual dexterity as an art form unto itself.

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All this is rightly overshadowed by the gambling inferno, the roulette and blackjack tables. Not since Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket* has a film so reveled in manual dexterity as an art form unto itself, though this time within the law, if only just. Hands in close-up dazzle us with their acrobatic, faster-than-the-eye dealing out of cards and raking in of chips, in a dance of destiny for few winners and many losers.

There is a corrupt fellow croupier, there are scarcely less questionable millionaire punters, and there are violent fights with cheaters. The casino has a supervisor with the power to hire and fire, who surveys everything on multiple screens in the control room, yet is sometimes fooled, or dispenses less than impartial justice. As superbly played by Alexander Morton, he is a confounding symbiosis of God and the Devil.

But *Croupier* does not bog down in metaphysics. The casino may be hell in some ways; in more ways, it is the world: different things to different people, even as the film must affect different viewers differently. Strikingly shot by Mike Garfath, with intelligent music by Simon Fisher Turner, and tautly written

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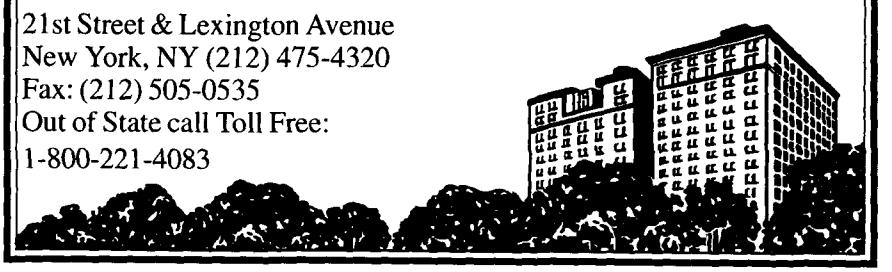

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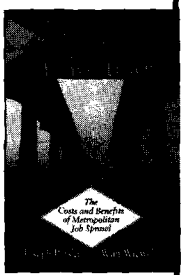

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and directed, it commutes between damnation and redemption, displaying a sophisticated irony that sees the double bottom in all things.

■ In his late-middle period, André Téchiné managed to make a couple of decent movies, notably My *Favorite Season* with Catherine Deneuve and, perhaps, *Wild Reeds* with the remarkable Elodie Bouchez (later of *The Dreamlife of Angels*). And, to his credit, he launched the career of Juliette Binoche in the otherwise undistinguished *Rendez-vous*.

Now he offers ***Alice and Martin***, in which he hurtles back to his old pretentious and inept ways. He co-wrote the screenplay with his usual collaborator, Gilles Taurand (late of Raúl Ruiz's *Time Regained*), and the uneven filmmaker Olivier Assayas. There is much nervous rushing about in short scenes with sudden cuts; young Martin races around especially crazedly during three weeks on the lam after escaping from home for seemingly no reason. But if Martin seems to suffer from dromomania, so does the camera, which finds it equally unendurable to remain still.

What is particularly annoying is that the reasonable explanation for Martin's driven and erratic behavior is withheld till quite late in the film, when, without warning, it is confusingly sprung on us as a flashback, in the guise of a confession to his girlfriend, the worried Alice. Still, chop an important scene out of any film and stick it in somewhere near the end, and presto, you've got yourself Art, or so Téchiné appears to think.

Alice is a young violinist with higher aspirations reduced to playing in a cheesy tango orchestra in louche Paris nightspots where half-naked men dance with one another. She lives in a dingy apartment just off the métro tracks, which she shares with Benjamin, the youngest of Martin's three half-brothers, a homosexual actor. He and Alice have a wonderful rapport while going sexually in opposite directions. When Martin, escaping from provincial Cahors, comes to them in Paris, they put him up. He finds a job as a male model, which soon makes him more affluent than the two of them combined, and able to find his own digs.

Martin is lusting after Alice in what, at 20, is his first passion for a woman. She tells him that she likes him but absolutely doesn't want him. A little later on, for no ostensible reason, she suddenly throws herself at him. That is the way most things happen in this movie. At the beginning, Martin's single-parent mother decides quite arbitrarily that her ten-year-old son must now go live with his far-off remarried father, whom the boy hardly knows and doesn't like. The father turns out to be a strict disciplinarian, which promptly spells trouble.

■

It is almost as if the three screenwriters had worked in isolation from one another.

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Ten years later (we skip forward), we get brief scenes involving Martin's two other half-brothers, one of whom works in a factory, where he suddenly hangs himself. The other is a small-town mayor running for higher office, who, when Alice, desperately anxious about Martin, seeks him out, receives her with extraordinary coldness. It is almost as if the three screenwriters had worked isolated from one another, in the end splicing their labors together in whatever cockamamie order.

There is a long section where Alice and Martin, rapturous new lovers, go off to Spain on holiday. They end up in a little seaside hostelry, remote and picturesque, where their love should prosper. But while Alice watches agonizedly, Martin merely swims and sulks. Of course, he has that unconfessed secret, and, as it arbitrarily turns out, no more money in the bank, even though he earned much and seemed to spend little. He takes everything out on Alice, which she, the former free spirit, endures like a humble drudge. Martin is played by the handsome but totally untalented Alexis Loret; Alice, by the supremely womanly and greatly gifted Juliette Binoche. If that is enough for you—and it may be—see the movie, but concentrate on Alice and ignore Martin. **NR**

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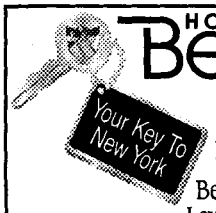
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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

On Dying for One's Country

NEW YORK, JULY 21

THE most appealing aspect of the argument over the estate tax is that some of the legislators who oppose it are actually saying that they think it wrong. Wrong as in not-good. The fashion is to approve or disapprove of a tax based on arguments entirely empirical. There are those also, respecting the estate tax, but the moral question is primary.

One begins—and lingers there, for a while—on the rate of the levy. When the estate tax kicks in, it swoops down asking for 55 percent on the vulnerable dollar. That is Bolshevik-style taxation. Taxation is generally at the level of 5 or 7 percent. Sales taxes are at that level, and even value-added taxes, which go higher, tend to rise to a maximum of 20 percent. To jump suddenly to 55 percent, the activating factor being the decease of the proprietor, makes of that tax a levy on a class of people, the wealthy. What it is is a capital levy.

How would Solomon, if called upon to do so, and if besotted enough to accept the challenge, defend the tax? Well, he might say, the millionaire who dies ought to leave the bulk of his money to Uncle Sam.

Why?

Because, you jerk, Uncle Sam has been very good to him. He has protected his property. He has been disposed to send the Marines to gun down any foreign country that seeks to come in and take away the property. At home, the police are there to guard the property. Therefore, it is reasonable that Uncle Sam should insist that he take the lion's share of the wealthy man's estate.

That reasoning founders on quite fundamental premises, which are that the dead millionaire who wants to reward Uncle Sam beyond what he has already paid in taxes during his lifetime is at liberty to do so for himself. Oliver Wendell Holmes said he didn't mind paying taxes, that was what civilization cost. Fine and dandy. But the man who elects *not* to leave the bulk of his estate to the government has convincingly to be told that the sacrifice is necessary in order to preserve the country.

But of course we all know that tax returns from estates are exiguous, just over 1 percent of annual revenues collected. We are bumping into the question of the moral right to target taxation based on wealth, and here is where the contest should be debated. Is it correct to impose a confiscatory level of tax, designed to punish only the wealthy (or ex-wealthy) dead?

The argument that there can't be persuasive reason to rewrite a law that affects so few people ought not to be accepted without scrutiny. It is true that only one of one hundred Americans dies having to pay 55 percent of his estate over to the government, and probably true that only one out of one hundred Americans exercises the right to free speech, which doesn't make free speech less august a right.

Liberalism is about protecting the minority, whether from racial or economic discrimination. If it is right to deprive someone of 55 percent of his capital, why should the state have to wait until death to lay claim to it?

On the empirical point, we have to use common sense. We are told that something on the order of $400 billion per year is expended on lawyers, accountants, and others whose design it is however slightly to maneuver around existing taxation in order to lessen the burden. If that is so, can't we generalize that the man (or woman) worth $10 million will mightily exert himself to reduce his exposure? And if so, what will be the impact of those exertions on the community? Is economic behavior encouraged which is alien to the public interest?

To the argument that, after all, high estate taxes have been on the books for so many years, why should we suddenly think them iniquitous, the proper observation is: What about the Social Security penalty? For decades a dollar of Social Security was deducted for every two dollars earned by 65-year-olds. Then, one day, somebody got up and said: This is *wrong*. And the *entire* Senate and House voted repeal of the invidious measure. Why don't they simply say, with the same moral assurance, that it's simply wrong to impose tax at confiscatory rates on the wealthy?

A good question, to which there is no persuasive answer.

"Hey, these are great—from now on, nobody will have trouble distinguishing right from wrong."

All Those Words!

NEW YORK, JULY 28

A FRIEND passes along a trivium which churned in the mind beginning immediately. It is that the typical man utters 10,000 words every day, the woman, 25,000. As is one's way on coming upon stray data, the tendency is to translate them into familiar integers like: It's about a thousand miles to Chicago from New York, to the moon is 240,000 miles. That's the equivalent of 120 round trips to Chicago.

Ten thousand words a day each for Al Gore and George W., 25,000 each for Tipper and Laura. Of course, that assumes they will be speaking during the campaign at about the average rate. One supposes, at first, that in a day of campaigning, they will speak more—all those addresses and stump speeches and the lot. On the other hand, maybe between speeches they are permitted to clam up ("Karl, don't chat with Al. He has to save up for the speeches in Bloomington, Indianapolis, and Cleveland . . ."). All Al needs to say at that point is, "Shut up, Tipper!" and to say that doesn't use up a lot of words.

One tends to take the measure of great quantities by building on familiar standards, as mentioned. As a boy I attended a school at which every student was required to give a 1,000-word speech once every academic year to the entire body of students (80). The headmaster allotted five to seven minutes for this torture (torture for both the speechmaker and his audience). We are to construe, from the data, that men tend to speak, between waking and bedtime, ten times the volume spoken by the terror-stricken boy speaking nonstop to the school assembly. That's the equivalent of rattling

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off ten speeches every day. And!—in the case of the woman—25 speeches per day. A waking day being, say, 16 hours, the woman's allotment comes to 1,500 words per hour. Granted, these words are not, like the boy speechmakers', spoken back to back. If that were so, we'd have 12,000 words per hour.

The telephone company would no doubt tell you how many words are spoken in a typical minute by a typical phone-user. I knew a man married to a friendly woman whose beneficences were regularly communicated over the telephone to family and friends. The husband would sit in the living room, reading the paper or a book, and every few minutes would permit himself to say, simply—"TCCM." That meant: Telephone Calls Cost Money. After a half-dozen of those, his wife would clutch down and soon utter a few words of farewell, putting down the telephone. How many words would she have spoken? And is the ratio—25 to 10—here suggested nicely caught? She is warbling along about this and that, up against his simple "TCCM"?

I did a recording for the blind of one of my books, and the accrued time was 9 hours, 32 minutes. The book is about 70,000 words long. The figures we are examining tell us that in recording that book I'd be pronouncing no more than my conversational quota for seven days. That doesn't sound so sweaty. But then the novel I read out had a narrative, a proper first act, second act, and third act. Do words that tell a tale cause less of a strain on listeners than mere badinage?

Not so clear, not at all. In the four hours required to hear *Hamlet*—think of it as 60 schoolboy speeches, or 60,000 words—do we feel less tired than after a four-hour session at home with visitors, going through cocktails, dinner, post-dinner conversation, maybe a little poker? There is the difference that if listening to *Hamlet* one absolutely has to concentrate on what is being said. That is more of a strain than absorbing, more or less, the more or less unabsorbing contributions of a visitor.

If it is a politician we are listening to we know that what he speaks will reflect the speechwriters' awareness of limited attention spans. There will therefore be strophes designed to cause the listener to turn his head from side to side, which heightens attention and inhibits sleepiness.

Those always in search of utilitarian opportunities have an interesting challenge in the figures cited. When Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee woke in the medieval court and saw Simon Stylites perched on top of a pillar, he thought to harness a wheel with a bell attached to a generator, so that while in pious service of the Lord, the stylite could simultaneously generate electricity.

What might Al Gore simultaneously generate while speaking his 10,000 words per day? Well, he could fortify the national reserves of patience, fatalism, endurance. Perhaps, at the next convention, he will announce his new discovery.

Colin Powell Says It Almost Right

NEW YORK, AUGUST 1

GENERAL POWELL is a formidable asset of the GOP and indeed the nation. That he is himself black is providential. If he were a Scandinavian one likes to think that he'd have risen as fast as he has. But a dirty little doubt in the matter would probably nestle in the closet of suspicion. His gifts are manifest, indeed radiant, so much so that anyone inclined to cultivate suspicion that his ascendancy depended on white patronization is quickly reassured by mere exposure to his strengths.

Now these aren't always quite sufficient to keep him out of rhetorical difficulty. *The New York Times* wasted only three introductory paragraphs before showcasing Gen. Powell's reference to affirmative action. "We must understand the cynicism that exists in the black community. The kind of cynicism that is created when, for example, some in our party miss no opportunity to roundly and loudly condemn affirmative action that helped a few thousand black kids get an education. But hardly a whimper is heard from them over affirmative action for lobbyists who load our federal tax codes with preferences for special interests."

That is a paralogism of the first order. 1) The case against affirmative action is the same as the case for equal treatment under the law. 2) The purpose of lobbies is to engage legislative or regulatory attention in behalf of an entity. That might be a corporation, or it might be a class, or it might be a minority. Lobbies are sometimes pleading for equal treatment, sometimes for special treatment. If yours is a sugar lobby pleading for higher tariffs, you are engaged in the traditional exercise of special pleading, and the pain is borne by the consumers, who pay more for sugar. 3) Affirmative action, of the kind opposed by public officials from Sen. Hubert Humphrey to Ward Connerly, targets individual victims, the non-black non-Hispanic non-Asian turned down for other reasons than competitive disqualification. There should be as many voices raised up against sugar tariffs as against racial discrimination, but the two contests are at entirely different moral levels. In the 1850s, the Yankees argued in favor of high tariffs and against human slavery. They'd have been disappointed to hear themselves indicted for cynicism.

Gen. Powell, so clear in his vision on so many matters, gets swallowed up every now and again when the matter touches on race and discrimination. Thus he mourns that there are two million convicts and that "most of them are men, and the majority of those men are minorities." Gen. Powell was less than satisfying in his failure to plumb the question: Why should this be so? Why are there more blacks and Hispanics in jail? On the other hand he was telling the Republican convention that a successful approach to the problem has been made in Texas, under Gov. Bush. Bush "expanded the charter-school movement. Seventeen thousand Texas kids are now in charter schools. Seventy-eight percent of those kids are minorities. Their parents had a choice and they decided what was best for their kids. The results in Texas have been dramatic. The number of students passing all parts of the standardized tests since 1994 has increased by 51 percent. Even more exciting, the number of minority students passing the tests has increased by 89 percent."

Along that narrow road, avoiding the abyss of affirmative action on the one side, neglect on the other, Gov. Bush came out with a formula which Gen. Powell has embraced. "Governor Bush has guaranteed acceptance at public universities for the top 10 percent of every high-school graduating class in the state." If the cynicism Gen. Powell so much deplores is to be avoided, the world needs to know that some schools in Texas don't become de facto conduits for noncompetitive minorities.

Powell was vigorous and forthright in endorsing the idea of vouchers for parents who find their children failing in local public schools. This theme—education—hit head-on by Gen. Powell and by Laura Bush, is surely the key to public support at a time in U.S. history when, to use Gen. Powell's language, "cynicism is created" when so many politicians loudly condemn the failure of our schools while enabling the teachers' unions to clog up the natural energies of intellectual curiosity to widen their horizons.

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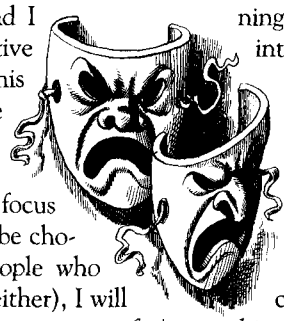
■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

It won't last, of course, but for the *moment I'm in a wonderful mood.* In fact, I'm happy, and if you want to credit (or blame) somebody for this unusual state of affairs you need look no further than Dick Cheney.

It has nothing to do with politics per se. Although I like his controversial congressional voting record, my reaction to him is a matter of what psychologists call "free association." He has become my personal, walking Rorschach test and I would have the same positive images of him whatever his politics were. They're the kind of deep-down personal reactions that campaign operatives try to dig out in focus groups, but since I'll never be chosen for a focus group (people who pick juries never want me either), I will bare my soul here for the purpose of showing why Cheney is the only good reason to vote in November.



The moment W. unveiled him, my life turned into one big inkblot. Each time I saw him on TV another sliver of memory emerged from the mist, fragmentary sights and sounds grew sharper, and lost tactile and olfactory sensations returned with a visceral twist of recognition.

I saw white shirts, a whole drawer full of them, each crisscrossed with the blue strip of paper the Chinese laundry put around them like a bandolier. I saw a vest with the gold chain of a pocket watch curving down across the stomach. I saw myself standing on tiptoe to plant a good-night kiss on the cheek of a man who gave off the pleasing scents of witch hazel and starch, and the sterner metallic smell of barber's clippers. Then, somewhere, a fast-forward button was pressed and I heard that same man's voice yelling "Put some clothes on!" and "Who is that boy?"

The TV was on throughout my Proustian time travels, which made them even more satisfying. Every time a querulous talking head said, "It's Daddy pick" and "This is your father's Oldsmobile," I pumped my fist and said, "Yesssss!"

Cheney is nothing like my father, who was as skinny as Fred Astaire and had the personality of the characters played by Clifton Webb and George Sanders. But Cheney is Everyfather, the consummate figure who has been missing from our national life long enough to make his absence felt in the chaotic statistics about single moms, gay marriage, and deranged teens that are recited daily.

But now, miraculously, he's not missing anymore. W.'s announcement of a running mate thrust the entire country into an old black-and-white family sitcom. Suddenly, America's collective front door opened and in walked Mr. Central Casting himself, a little pudgy, a little rumpled, a little tired, to send shock waves of recognition through the millions who could have sworn they heard him call out "It's me!"

Not all of the shock waves were positive. Most of the media, unable or unwilling to acknowledge the overnight emergence of a universal father symbol, talked around the point, dredging up a word that would mean what they said without saying what they meant: "gravitas."

The Gravitas Hour swung into high gear. Not since *Amos and Andy* dominated radio have so many Americans listened to the same thing at the same time. From every discussion show on every channel of every TV in the land there poured forth testimonials to Dick Cheney's gravitas. Gravitas was what he had; gravitas was what he was. On and on it went, until gravitas meant Cheney and Cheney meant gravitas. Now he was not only a symbol but a synonym.

Identifying someone as the incarnation of solidity and seriousness is risky business. When it dawned on the media that all their talk of gravitas might be having an unintended effect, they followed it up with the dismissive assertion that "People don't vote for vice presidents." Don't they? If we keep seeing dais shots of a fidgety W. darting his pleading eyes over the crowd while a patiently resigned Cheney waits with his hand in his pocket, it's only a matter of time before someone asks, "Who's that standing next to Gravitas?"

I am savoring Cheney while I can, because it won't be long before the hand comes out of the pocket to grasp that of his wife. I liked the way she took his arm instead, but the GOP image patrol will soon put a stop to that. Hand-holding by political couples is one of those new traditions that we hew to so religiously; Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter started it and now none dare call it low class.

Indications are that the overhaul of Cheney's reassuringly inhibited self has already begun. He dropped his g's on *Nightline* and back-pedaled on his conservative congressional votes with a suspiciously worded defense. Left to his own devices, he probably would have responded as his former boss did when confronted with his old congressional votes. "Forget the record," Gerald Ford said cavalierly during his first week as president, "the record reflects Grand Rapids." But instead, Cheney said that if he had it to do over, he probably would "tweak" his.

The word didn't sound like him. Whoever heard of "tweaking" a voting record? It sounds like something a plastic surgeon does. I bet it was dreamed up by some fax-happy Bush operative assigned to squish recognizable personalities into shape.

Democrats are using gravitas to mean boring, white male, and arch-conservative, while Republicans are using it to mean a hard-working nice guy, but its original meaning was something quite different, as F. R. Cowell describes in *Cicero and the Roman Republic*:

> No Roman in any circumstances could regard himself as vanquished. This was the key to the real strength of the Republic. The other well-known virtues of the Romans followed from it; their manliness and courage in battle (virtus), their sobriety, their consciousness of their responsibilities, their disciplining of the emotions (gravitas), and their readiness to give single-minded attention to the practical needs of the hour (simplicitas). With it all went a precise formality by which almost all their other actions were guided.

This is what we need after eight years of President Peter Pan. Too bad we can't vote for Cheney-Bush, or better yet, Cheney-Thompson. **NR**

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